

FE Week

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'FROM SEPTEMBER'**

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JUDE BURKE @JUDEBURKE77

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PM pledges to 'break down false boundaries between FE and HE'

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NEWS

Stoke-on-Trent silent on 'severance' pay for job-switch CEO

JUDE BURKE
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FROM FRONT EXCLUSIVE

A cash-strapped college will not explain why it paid thousands of pounds in severance to its former chief executive – even though she went straight into another job in charge of the college's academy trust.

Sarah Robinson led Stoke-on-Trent College until March last year, and that same month took a new role as full-time chief executive of what was then the College Academies Trust, which was run by the college at the time.

Despite this, she has confirmed to FE Week that she received a severance payment from the college, as part of a £150,000 "compensation for loss of office" paid to "former key management personnel" that was listed in the college's 2016/17 accounts.

The accounts also revealed the college was almost £16 million in the red and dependent on government bailouts.

But the college refused to say why it had paid its former boss this severance, nor how

much she received. It would also not comment on how many people split the £150,000.

"Information relating to former key management personnel of the college is documented in the 2016-17 accounts," a spokesperson said.

Ms Robinson left on March 3, 2017, after more than six years in charge.

She refused to divulge to FE Week how much she received in severance, claiming it was "overseen by the FE commissioner and with legal opinion" and "made at contractual and statutory rates".

Accounts show she received £101,000 in salary between August 1 2016 until March 3 2017. Statutory redundancy calculations take into account weekly pay, but it was not clear as FE Week went to press what her payment would have been.

Ms Robinson insisted the payoff was a "direct result of the fresh start for Stoke-on-Trent College".

"Fresh start" was the recommendation that emerged from a commissioner-led structure and prospects appraisal in February last year,



Stoke-on-Trent college

Sarah Robinson

after the college had been "unable to find a willing strategic partner".

This process was recommended to a number of colleges following the area reviews, or as a result of FE commissioner intervention.

Colleges commit to significantly changing their business or operating model, and the process can include a change in senior leadership.

According to accounts for the academy trust, Ms Robinson stepped into her current role as its chief executive in the same month she left the college.

"There is also a charge for the group chief executive's time (until appointed by the trust as full time CEO in March 2017) which is spent running the trust," the document said.

It's not clear how much she currently earns at the trust.

The accounts show that one person working there received a salary in the band £150,001 and £160,000 during 2016/17, and also that Ms

Robinson received remuneration of between £70,000 and £75,000 in return for services she provided to the trust.

A spokesperson for the trust said it had "bought in" Ms Robinson's services as chief executive when it was still linked to the college.

Following Ms Robinson's departure the trust could no longer do this, so it appointed her as interim chief executive to guide it through the process of becoming independent – with her appointment made permanent from January 1, following a national recruitment process.

Ms Robinson had a turbulent final few months at the college, including a failed audit which found "over £3 million of SFA funding claimed that the auditors were unable to confirm accuracy regarding" and a "negotiated clawback from the EFA circa £250,000 of funding", according to governing board minutes.



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NEWS

Fresh AEB shock: Now the ESFA is using it to bail out colleges

JUDE BURKE
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FROM FRONT

The adult education budget is being used to cover the cost of emergency handouts to struggling colleges – causing outrage with the Department for Education.

But in the same week that news broke of a £63 million AEB underspend, the government has repeatedly refused to say exactly how much is being used for these bailouts.

AELP boss Mark Dawe said he was appalled that AEB cash was being used for this purpose.

“Complete transparency is needed and instead of bailing out failed institutions, any underspend should be reallocated to support the participation of learners by effective providers,” he said.

“We shouldn’t need clever sleuthing from FE Week to get a fuller picture of the scale of the bailouts; nor should we just receive incomplete answers on the size of the AEB underspend and what it’s being used for.”

FE Week found out about this unplanned use of the AEB during a weeks-long attempt to discover how much government money is being spent on failing institutions.

This was itself prompted by the DfE’s accidental revelation earlier this month that more than £11 million had been dished out to 12 colleges in December alone.

At the time, the DfE told us that information about colleges’ exceptional financial support (EFS) funding could be “found in individual colleges’ annual accounts” and that “the value of the EFS loan book is reported in the Education and Skills Funding Agency annual accounts”.

EFS is only available to colleges that are “encountering financial or cashflow difficulties that put the continuation of provision at risk”, and which have “exhausted all other options” – and it can come as a loan or a grant.

When we asked two weeks ago whether details of the EFS grants were published anywhere, we were told they were paid from the AEB – information which was included in



the ESFA’s 2016/17 accounts.

However, a spokesperson conceded the accounts did not include the level of detail we were looking for.

FE Week is still waiting for a response to a Freedom of Information request submitted last month asking for more details on how much EFS has been doled out so far.

We may not get one however; the DfE is claiming an exemption on the basis that it intends to publish the information in the future.

The £63 million underspend was revealed via a parliamentary question answered by skills minister Anne Milton. Her response was met with anger and disbelief by Mr Dawe earlier this week.

He said it was “disappointing” that the answer only referred to the “mainstream participation element of the budget” and not the whole budget.

The heavily over-subscribed AEB tender –

which saw independent training providers bid for their share of £110 million – was evidence of “unmet demand” for the budget, he argued.

However, Julian Gravatt, the deputy chief executive at the Association of Colleges, said the AEB underspend happened “because the rules are too restrictive and because the funding rates are too low”.

“If the DfE used money from this budget for temporary financial support, this is better than not using it all. Better still would be to fund adult further education properly,” he said.

FE Week has reported on a number of colleges that are dependent on EFS support – including Bradford College, which was bailed out twice in one month, and Stoke-on-Trent College.

The bailout tap will be turned off later this year once the insolvency regime – introduced as part of the Technical and Further Education Act 2017 – comes into effect.

DfE announces apprenticeship funding bands review

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Apprenticeship funding bands could be about to change in an effort to help employers negotiate with providers over training costs.

The Department for Education announced earlier this week that it would review the “effectiveness” of the current band structure.

This includes “considering funding band structures”, and any changes will apply to new starts from August 2018.

But some are worried that the move to

help employers strike a harder bargain could cause a severe slip in quality.

“When we moved to 15 funding bands, we expected to see employers and providers negotiating on price below the funding band upper limit,” the government’s guidance said.

“However, this hasn’t materialised across all of the market, with many employers telling us that they do not feel able to negotiate with providers. We are therefore considering changes to incentivise negotiation and drive better value for money.”

There is particular bemusement from the provider side.

Paul Freeman, director of education and

talent at GK Apprenticeships, which delivers digital apprenticeships to both levy- and non-levy-paying employers, said that none of the 80 to 100 employers he works with have challenged the cost.

Levy-payers are “struggling to spend” their funds, “so price isn’t an issue”.

“They would prefer to make sure their programmes are developed with more learning content and thus adding extra value and delivering more quality, as opposed to challenging on price,” he added.

One employer had intimated it might want to negotiate the price in the future – but not for another two or three years, he claimed

Mark Dawe, the chief executive of the AELP, warned that the government should be “careful what it wishes for”.

“Downward pressure” with price negotiations between employers wanting the cheapest deal and providers “can impact negatively on the quality of delivery”.

“We have heard of large providers walking away from levy-payers’ auctions because they feel that they cannot deliver good quality at the price demanded,” he went on.

“The whole idea of price negotiation for a government education programme is completely misguided and this is one of the lessons that the government should learn from Learndirect and Carillion.”

John Hyde, chair of HIT Training, said his provider had “walked away from tenders” as they simply “can’t deliver” standards under a particular price.

HIT would only consider negotiating if employers had “very large numbers” of apprentices and “we can run discrete programmes” – but none of the employers they deal with have anywhere near that number yet, he said.

The Confederation of British Industry declined to comment. The Federation of Small Businesses said that it wasn’t an issue its members had raised.

All apprenticeship standards and frameworks are allocated a funding band of between £3,000 and £27,000.

That band represents the maximum government or levy funding an apprenticeship can attract, and employers are expected to negotiate with providers on the price.

Employers can agree to pay more than the funding band maximum, and pay the difference from their own cash.

The current 15 funding bands were introduced in May 2017, an increase from the previous six funding caps for apprenticeship standards.

According to the DfE’s announcement, the maximum funding band will stay the same, but other bands could change. Any changes would be confirmed in the spring.

“If we do change the funding band structure, we will work with the IfA to ensure that any new standards that are approved for delivery are allocated to both one of the 15 current funding bands and to a new, post-August funding band,” the DfE confirmed.



NEWS

VAT crackdown will see learner volumes tumble

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The government's troubled FE loans policy is on the ropes again, as private providers admit they expect learner volumes to drop after the tax office said it would start enforcing VAT charges.

HMRC had been meant to start adding a 20-per-cent charge to advance learner loans when the scheme was introduced in 2013.

But the rule has not been applied consistently because HMRC has given out incorrect advice for years.

Officials finally seem however to have realised they are missing out on millions of pounds in uncollected VAT, and published "clarification guidance" in January emphasising that all independent providers – many of which were unaware of the requirement – must pay the tax.

Many providers are aggrieved that the charge applies only to them and not colleges, and they now fear that the number of people taking out FE loans will fall dramatically.

"Charging VAT now will highly impact on the volumes," said Kelly Klum, the finance manager at Lionheart in the Community, a provider which should have paid over £500,000 in VAT since 2014.

"Most learners are aware of the course fees and also feel that education should not be



subject to VAT. We feel disappointed."

Benjamin Anokye-Yeboah, the director of Millennium Academy, which should have had a VAT bill of over £700,000, insisted that HMRC has created "a mess", and that the unexpected clampdown is "going to be a problem" because students won't want to pay the additional money.

FTC Kaplan, another large FE loans private provider, said that even though it had itself consistently charged VAT, "in making this a level playing field, the prices of courses of some other training providers may now increase as they become compliant".

Mark Dawe, the boss of the AELP, is furious with the lack of parity between colleges and ITPs.

"All that matters is that independent

providers will now have 20 per cent fewer learners on their programmes than colleges for the same amount of funding simply because they are a different type of provider," he said.

Peter Mitchell, the chief finance officer of Lifetime Training, the largest provider of FE loans since 2013, claimed that the situation meant that colleges will now always have an advantage over ITPs, as they can "either retain 20 per cent more of the course fee in their revenue or charge 20 per cent less to the student".

The Pathway Group, which has always charged VAT on loans, added that it was "frustrating" for independent providers that there is "not a level playing field" with colleges.

There is mounting evidence that the FE loans policy is failing.

FE Week exposed last September that there'd been a massive 58 per cent underspend – amounting to almost £1 billion – since 2013.

HMRC is not forcing providers to make up missed payments from the past, admitting that its previously conflicting guidance had been an error of its own creation.

"When we became aware that the policy was not being applied correctly we issued guidance to give greater certainty to providers," a spokesperson said.

This decision hasn't been welcomed by all in the sector, however.

"Over the four years of being a provider with student loan funding I have paid out thousands in VAT yet my competitors maybe haven't, making their business more profitable," said Christine Tilley, the owner of the Yorkshire College of Beauty. "This can't be right."

Advance learner loans were introduced in 2013/14 for students studying courses at levels three or four and aged 24 and older.

FE Week revealed in September that just £652 million in loan-funded provision had actually been delivered since 2013, against a massive £1.56 billion in allocations.

Along with this, there has been a near-40-per-cent fall in the numbers of level three and four learners since the loans were introduced, sparking dire warnings across the sector.



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NEWS

Employer satisfaction surveys to be audited for first time

BILLY CAMDEN
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The government will audit the results of its employer satisfaction survey for the first time, due to concerns over the way it is distributed by providers.

The ESFA said it would provide “additional quality assurance” in this year’s survey, in new guidance, in order to ensure the data is comparable between providers.

It specifically wants to “ensure that colleges and training organisations are using the prescribed methods to survey their employer customers”.

To pass the audits, providers must email their employers with a link to the survey along with their employer ID.

The ESFA claims this is the “best method” for surveying, as results are “instant” and easily comparable.

If employers are more likely to respond by paper, a hardcopy of the questionnaire can be sent.

The guidance makes clear, however, that interviews must not be done over the phone or in person as employer confidentiality “must be protected”.

The agency will “monitor” cooperation with the rules through its audits, which have been introduced to ensure comparability.

The questions themselves will also be different this year.

These are being updated to “ensure the survey continues to provide information that employers find useful”, but the agency did not provide examples.

As with previous years, the survey will be provider-led, requiring colleges and training organisations to administer it to their employer customers themselves in the first instance.

If providers are unable to meet their minimum response target, the ESFA will step in and ask the polling company Ipsos MORI to contact employers directly to gather the answers.

The employer satisfaction survey runs every year. It asks employers to rate their pleasure with different aspects of training delivered by individual college and training organisations.

The data collected then allows employers to make comparisons.

The survey for 2017/18 will start on March 26.

Mayors complain about weak AEB devolution powers

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The six regional mayors tasked with overseeing the devolved adult education budget have met the Department for Education to “voice concerns” over the process.

High among the issues that are worrying the combined authorities are “inadequate” influence and a lack of funding during the transition year, as well as “challenging” timescales for the handing over of power.

The transition year is set to take place over 2018/19, after the original plan to fully devolve the budget was delayed by a year.

After Tuesday’s meeting, Tim Bowles, the mayor of the West of England combined authority, said the mayors were “encouraged” by the fact the DfE is “actually now listening” to concerns about implementation and that dialogue was “now becoming positive”.

He explained that the West of England is expecting between £15 million and £20 million a year once the devolution is implemented in 2019/20, even though this would “never be enough to meet the ambitions that I have”.

He also confirmed that his region would be seeking additional funding elsewhere.

A report submitted to the Tees Valley combined authority cabinet in November revealed that the authorities were given a choice of two arrangements for the transition year: an “influencing” option or a strict “delegated” option.

The “influencing” option would see the combined authorities attempt to guide how the ESFA spends its budget in their regions during the transition year.

The extent of that influence is unclear, but the Tees Valley report described it as “inadequate” and of “limited benefit”.

Under the delegated option, the education secretary would delegate AEB functions and funding to the authority.

This body would then act as an “agent” of the secretary within a “rigid set of parameters” to commission skills provision, fund providers and manage delivery. For this option, the authority would need to pass “stringent practical readiness conditions”.

The report warned this option “creates too many risks for the combined authority without adequate corresponding benefits” and does not have a clear legal basis, and there are concerns it could create “additional risk for providers receiving this funding”.

A spokesperson for the DfE confirmed that every combined authority including Tees Valley had decided to take the influencing option for the transitional year.

She added that the devolution was “progressing well” and details about the transition period would be revealed “in due course”, despite the fact the government had promised more information at the start of year.

A spokesperson for Liverpool City region confirmed it would have “no

actual delegated power on the way the budget is spent” during the transitional year, and did not know how much funding it would receive.

“There has been progress with the DfE in recent months,” he added. “The timescales remain challenging, but we will continue to work at pace to enable the devolution of the AEB to proceed on time.”

Seven combined authorities have signed devolution deals alongside London to take control of AEB spending in their regions, with the newly announced North of Tyne combined authority expected to do the same.

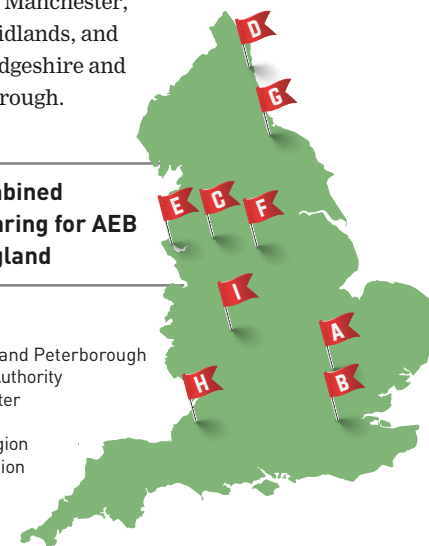
Sheffield City region, one of the seven set for devolution, will elect a mayor in May.

The other authorities receiving devolved AEB budgets are Greater Manchester, West Midlands, and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

A map of the combined authorities preparing for AEB devolution in England

KEY

- A Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- B Greater London Authority
- C Greater Manchester
- D North of Tyne
- E Liverpool City Region
- F Sheffield City Region
- G Tees Valley
- H West of England
- I West Midlands



DfE hands out another £2m for more levy research

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

An FE-focused research centre has been given the ministerial nod to continue its work until 2020, and the apprenticeship levy will be particularly in focus.

The Centre for Vocational Educational Research had its mid-term review at the beginning of this year.

After an initial £3 million grant from the Department for Education in May 2015, and there had been speculation about its long term prospects.

It has now been given an extra £2 million to continue until the end of the decade, and has some stirring projects up its sleeve. These include evaluations on FE’s role in increasing social mobility, and the impact of university technical colleges.

Its work on the apprenticeship levy, however, is likely to bring the most interest.

After gaining recent approval from its steering group, CVER has started planning a major evaluation of the policy, which came into effect last April.

“The focus of the work on the apprenticeship levy will be on its effect on training outcomes, overall and by sector,” said Dr Sandra McNally, who leads the centre.

“Questions will include: ‘to what extent has the training been additional to what would have taken place otherwise?’ ‘How has the

volume and composition of apprenticeship training been affected?’ and ‘Has there been any change on the characteristics of those being trained by firms?’”

The evaluation will be conducted using a quantitative analysis, involving the use of “various data sets including the Individual Learner Record, the Employers Skills Survey, the Employers Perspective Survey, the Inter-Departmental Business Register and the Annual Business Survey”.

There is no set publication date, as the research will involve “complex” data construction and analysis, and the policy needs to run for long enough to have its true effect judged.

In the three years it has been running, CVER has focused on collating “huge administrative data”, such as individual learner records, the national pupil database and longitudinal education outcomes data, in an attempt to process, code and apply it to research.

It currently has about 30 projects on three main themes: the impact of vocational and technical education on individuals, firms and growth; the drivers of the quality of provision in FE; and the factors affecting individuals’ participation in vocational education.

The centre is currently, for example, evaluating how the opening of UTCs affects the “enrolment and attainment” of the students living in the approximate catchment area of the college.

The Department for Education said that since its conception, CVER has “created accessible information and data on the vocational education sector and built high-quality, policy-oriented research on the topic”.

It added that the overall themes of CVERs work “will continue but with increased emphasis on social mobility, the apprenticeship levy and standards, and drivers of quality in FE”.

CVER’s work around social mobility will explore to what extent participation in vocational education is related to family background, how FE routes influence social mobility, and what the role is of training providers for influencing progression.

“I am delighted with the decision to fund CVER for the full five years to mid-2020,” Dr McNally said.

“We have an exciting programme of research which I hope and expect to make a useful contribution to policy.”

While CVER has been given the green light to continue its work, one “pioneering” FE research centre had its funding come to an end last year.

The Behavioural Research Centre for Adult Skills and Knowledge (ASK) was given £2.9 million by the now-defunct Department for Business Innovation and Skills back in 2014, to carry out randomised control trials to apply behavioural science to adult learning.

Its grant ended in April 2017 and it is due to release its final reports in the coming months.

NEWS

AoC wants a much larger HE role for colleges

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

The prime minister has announced a review of post-18 education and funding for both further and higher education, and she picked a college to launch it from.

The Association of Colleges hopes the review will herald a massive expansion in higher education delivered by its members.

Speaking exclusively to FE Week from Derby College, where Theresa May delivered her speech, AoC boss David Hughes described the review as a huge deal for the sector.

The finer details surrounding the scope of the review were not revealed, nor the extent to which FE would be involved, but it is expected to focus on funding at level four and above.

“The review is significant because it is the first proper review of higher education, post-18, level four-plus provision I have ever seen,” said Mr Hughes, who was provider services director at the Skills Funding Agency until 2011.

He believes the government is open to presenting colleges with potential opportunities to expand in to the higher education market.

“That includes opening up fair funding to incentivise people to consider level four, five and six part-time flexible learning as well,” he continued.

“Colleges have a massive part to play in that – they already offer over 150,000 students



HE across the country, but they could do so much more if the funding was fair and proportionate with the undergraduate route.”

The review is not expected to look in much depth at adult education funded by the Education and Skills Agency.

It will however cover arrangements with the Higher Education Funding Council for England, which has been responsible for the distribution of funding for higher education to universities and further education colleges in England since 1992.

Mr Hughes was delighted at the choice of Derby College to host the speech, and acknowledged that using a college as the

venue holds major significance.

“Out of all the places she could decide on to make her speech, the prime minister chose Derby College,” he said. “It’s a fantastic college in the middle of the country in a part of the world that needs more people to do HE.”

In her speech, Mrs May called for a parity of esteem between “academic and technical options” to “create a system of tertiary education that works for all our young people”.

This “means equality of access to an academic university education which is not dependent on your background, and a much

greater focus on the technical alternatives”.

Mick Fletcher, the founder of Policy Consortium, was more circumspect.

“I’m pleased that it is called the post-18 education and funding review though I’m pretty certain it won’t cover the whole of post-18 education and training,” he said.

“Will it deal with level three and below for example? Will it look at FE loans alongside HE loans? Will it look at maintenance costs for FE students?”

He expects it won’t.

The review is also supposed to “look at how to support flexible life-long learning, including part-time and distance learning”.

“We are pleased to see the acknowledgement of finding a sustainable way to fund lifelong learning,” said FE Week columnist Dr Susan Pember, the director of the adult community education body HOLEX.

“However it would be helpful to have more clarity about the scope of the review.”

Mark Leach, the chief executive of higher education blog and think-tank Wonkhe, was also sceptical of the prime minister’s intentions.

“The terms of the review need to be made crystal clear to give all parts of the post-18 education system clarity about what’s on the table and how they might engage with a review,” he said.

After the speech, the DfE said that “the government is committed to conducting a major review across post-18 education and funding to ensure a joined-up system that works for everyone”.

FE principal named on HE funding review panel

The panel undertaking a year-long review into higher education and funding will include one college principal.

Bev Robinson, who heads up Blackpool and the Fylde College, is one of five members of the panel, which will be chaired by finance expert and author Philip Augar.

Ms Robinson is no stranger to government review panels, having taken part in the Sainsbury Review of technical education, which concluded in 2016 and led to the government’s plans to introduce T-levels

from 2020. She was also named to the board of the Institute for Apprenticeships in January last year.

Other panel members announced include Professor Alison Wolf, who led the influential Wolf Review of vocational education in 2011.

“I am delighted to chair this crucial review and to work alongside an excellent panel experienced in many different parts of the tertiary education sector,” said Mr Augar.

“A world-class post-18 education system has never been more important to business,

society and the economy. We will be focused on ensuring that the system meets those needs by driving up access, quality, choice and value for money for students of all kinds and taxpayers.

“I look forward to engaging widely with students, business, and providers across the

post-18 education landscape. This is a wide, open and far-reaching review. We begin with no preconceptions and our first priority will be a serious examination of the evidence and hearing from a broad range of stakeholders who like us are committed to ensuring the system works for everyone.”

The panel: Who’s who

Bev Robinson – Principal of Blackpool and The Fylde College. She has over 20 years’ experience in further and higher education colleges in England and has been awarded an OBE for her services to FE.

Edward Peck – Vice-chancellor of Nottingham Trent University since August 2014. Previously, Professor Peck worked at the University of Birmingham as director of the health services management centre and subsequently became head of the school of public policy in 2006.

Alison Wolf – a crossbench peer in the House of Lords, and author of the influential Wolf Review of vocational education, published in

2011. She has advised the Commons select committee on education and skills as well as the OECD, the ministries of education in New Zealand, France and South Africa, and the European Commission, among others.

Sir Ivor Martin Crewe – Master of University College, Oxford and president of the Academy of Social Sciences. He is the former chair of the 1994 Group and president of Universities UK.

Jacqueline De Rojas – President of techUK and the chair of the digital leaders’ board. She also serves on the government’s Digital Economy Council and was awarded a CBE in the 2017 new year’s honours.



Bev Robinson

NEWS

Skills minister: Apprenticeships will surge in September

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS
@PIPPA_AK

EXCLUSIVE

The skills minister says September is the month by when she expects a surge in apprenticeship starts, as revealed in an exclusive webinar with FE Week.

Anne Milton revealed that she is looking to the start of the next academic year, during her chat on Tuesday with FE Week's editor Nick Linford.

"I will be told by my officials that I shouldn't say this, but I'm going to say it anyway," she said. "I would hope by September to see some real numbers."

Figures released by the Department for Education in January revealed apprenticeship starts have fallen 41 per cent since the introduction of the levy in May, compared with the same period in the previous year.

Provisional starts for the first quarter of 2017, covering August, September and October, showed a fall of 26 per cent on the previous year.

For the government to hit its target of three million apprenticeship starts by 2020 there would need to be an average of at least 50,000 starts a month.

But the monthly average over the first 28 months stands at just 41,470.

However, Ms Milton believes there has been "quite a dramatic shift with employers" recently, and said many are "planning to rapidly increase numbers" of apprentices, particularly in the retail and hospitality sectors.

"We've done some proper investigation," she said. "These things take time, and it's only been a year. But the providers are waiting in the wings and ready to go."

During the webinar, sponsored by the Northern Council for Further Education (NCFE) and featuring the Education and Skills Funding Agency's director of funding and programmes Keith Smith, Ms Milton said local MPs have a role to play in encouraging small businesses to take on more apprentices.

"We are doing some teaching sessions for MPs," she said. "I've got 650 disciples in the Houses of Parliament. They know their local



Anne Milton

areas, they know a lot of small businesses.

"I think they can do a great deal of work with them. I think that's a great opportunity."

Ms Milton also said the mandatory 10-per cent cash co-investment for employers was a "good deal" and a question of "how much you value your apprentice".

"If you don't see it as a good deal, you should question your business model," she added.

However, she said she was "not unsympathetic" to employers who felt the two-year apprenticeship levy window was too short and wants to engage with them towards the end of the year to see what position they are in then.

"I can't sit here and promise anything. It's a point well made, let's put it that way," she said.

"All that matters to me is that we get apprentices good qualifications that have real currency and employers get the skills they need.

"And we will do anything, and remove barriers, to make sure they get that."

Mr Smith meanwhile revealed the ESFA's plans to develop apprenticeship policy over the next year, including the option for employers to transfer 10 per cent of the levy to another employer from April.

He said the new policy should be seen as an "employer-led opportunity" and means "levy-paying employers taking control of where they want to invest their funds".

At the end of the session, Ms Milton said FE Week's webinar had been a "great opportunity" and she was looking forward to "doing it again soon".

Starts target slips further out of reach as November flops

NICK LINFORD
@NICKLINFORD

There were just 27,000 apprenticeship starts last November according to new figures, 40 per cent fewer than in 2016.

This latest update to the monthly starts will come as a huge disappointment following declines of 21 and 24 per cent in September and October.

The figures from August 2017 onwards remain provisional, and the Department for Education has warned that they are subject to change.

The government did not publish monthly updates or starts on a monthly basis in previous years, so it is not possible to compare provisional figures.

Provisional figures published by the DfE in January revealed that starts for the first quarter of 2017, covering August, September and October, were down 26 per cent compared with the same quarter the previous year.

The government's target is to hit three million apprenticeship starts by 2020.

November 2017 is just past the five-year halfway point, and as of that month there had been 1,226,900 starts since May 2015.

This is currently 18 per cent below the target trajectory, representing a sizable and widening gap – leaving the DfE with a shortfall of 283,100 starts it has to find simply to get back on track.

The country would have to add an average of at least 50,000 apprenticeship starts per month to have a chance of achieving that ambition, a threshold which has only been passed three times since May 2015.

Numbers like these have caused the Association of Colleges to demand the target be scrapped.

However, a spokesperson for the DfE said the government is still "committed" to hitting the target.

During an exclusive FE Week interview on Tuesday, the skills minister Anne Milton revealed she expects to see a surge in apprenticeship starts by September.

"I will be told by my officials that I

shouldn't say this, but I'm going to say it anyway," she said. "I would hope that by September to see some real numbers."

Responding to the latest figures two days later, Ms Milton said employers had seen "a period of significant change" over the last year and the DfE would continue to "work with them to adjust and respond."

She added that as employers have two years to spend their levy funds, it is "right" they plan "high-quality apprenticeship training that meets their specific needs and maximises the benefits apprenticeships can bring".

Mark Dawe, the chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers told FE Week that the government

had run out of excuses.

"Here is hard evidence rather than anecdote and we don't want to hear any more excuses," he said. "These latest figures seem to confirm that the government is currently way short of hitting its manifesto target.

"But the real concern is the impact on social mobility as we see fewer starts for young people and at levels two and three. How many more months' data do we need before the government starts taking action?"

"AELP is calling for no more employer contributions towards apprenticeships for 16- to 24-year-olds at non-levy-paying employers, or at employers that have exceeded their levy."

Monthly apprenticeship starts

Month/year	2015	2016	2017*	Fall since 2016	
May	32,800	36,700	12,900	-23,800	-65%
June	38,800	37,000	14,200	-22,800	-62%
July	43,800	44,100	20,900	-23,200	-53%
August	37,100	37,700	21,900	-15,800	-42%
September	80,100	77,800	61,300	-16,500	-21%
October	47,900	48,700	37,000	-11,700	-24%
November	43,700	44,700	27,000	-17,700	-40%
Total starts	326,215	328,716	195,200	-131,500	-41%

Analysis of DfE monthly 'apprenticeship and levy statistics' by FE Week

* Apprenticeship levy funded starts introduced in May 2017 and figures for August - Nov 2017 are provisional and subject to change

NEWS

Ofsted accused of waste as two inspectors visit just seven learners

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

EXCLUSIVE

Ofsted has been accused of wasting scarce resources on an inspection that only took into account seven learners.

Leicester-based Train Together was rated 'good' overall at its first ever inspection last month.

But the two-strong inspection team only took seven learners into account, and they were all directly funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

The provider is also training around 300 learners as a subcontractor for Calderdale College and Lincoln College, but they were ignored because they are the responsibility of the lead contractors.

Training standards for a further 65 apprentices was also overlooked, because the provider only "very recently" started running this type of provision.

Certain quarters of the sector have suggested the inspection has been a waste of Ofsted resources, at a time when the chief inspector has been asking for more funding to keep tabs on the expanding numbers of apprenticeship providers.

Ofsted implied the inspection would not have taken place at all, had it known there were so few directly contracted learners on roll.

"Once an inspection has started, we have to inspect the provider as we find it," a

Web...

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	2
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	N/A							
Number of learners for whom the provider receives high-needs funding	N/A							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

The Ofsted report page explaining how many learners were considered

spokesperson said. "We work hard to ensure that we use our resources as efficiently as possible. We usually get this right, but occasionally the data misleads us."

He didn't explain why no-one called the provider before the inspection to check on learner numbers.

"Sometimes the data that we are dealing with is not up to date," he added.

"We inspect the provision that is the responsibility of the provider. We do not consider any subcontracted provision that is not the direct responsibility of the provider."

The Association of Employment and

Learning Providers boss Mark Dawe questioned whether inspection should have taken place, and said it was "one of many examples where government data would seem the data have let us down".

But Charles Dall'Omo, managing director of Train Together, defended the decision to inspect.

"Having Ofsted visit us was hugely beneficial," he said. "Ofsted, like all of us,

is responding to what is a rapidly changing marketplace. Independent training providers need to be monitored and measured regardless of size."

He insisted that despite their "numbers being small", he has "an experienced team" worthy of consideration.

"All providers should operate ready for inspection," he added.

Train Together launched in 2010 and was allocated just £180,179 in direct ESFA funding for 2017/18.

It was listed last year as a subcontractor to Calderdale College and Lincoln College,

through contracts worth £975,000.

Mr Dall'Omo said he was still pleased to be training around 300 learners for the colleges.

The Ofsted report did not mention its subcontracting activities once, though it did note that Train Together's apprenticeships will be inspected "at a later date".

Chief inspector Amanda Spielman warned the Commons public accounts committee last month that Ofsted's resources are being increasingly stretched.

Former skills minister Robert Halfon, who now chairs the Commons education committee, said the inspectorate should start directly inspecting subcontracted provision.

Ofsted currently doesn't, but it has announced a new, "tougher approach" to subcontracting, including monitoring visits, that will concentrate on lead providers. Subcontractors will probably not be graded on their subcontracted provision any time soon, however.

Inspectors recognised in the report that the seven were "confident, contribute well to team working and show good interpersonal skills".

It explained they were mostly studying specialist support for teaching and learning in schools and higher-level teaching assistants' courses. The provider's apprentice programmes focus on teaching and learning and business administration.

Leaders were praised for creating a "highly inclusive culture that focuses on developing individual talent for the benefit of the business, employers and learners".

Chartered membership reaches double figures

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

Three new colleges have joined the Chartered Institution for Further Education, bring the total membership into double figures for the first time.

The lucky three are WMC – The Camden College, Trafford College, and Burton and South Derbyshire College.

They are all rated either 'outstanding' or 'good' by Ofsted.

CIFE was first conceived back in 2012 to get high-achieving FE providers the royal seal of approval.

Almost six years later – and more than two years after it first started accepting paying members – 11 providers have now achieved chartered status.

It's a degree of progress for chief executive Dan Wright, who told FE Week in January that his goal was to make CIFE self-sufficient by 2019.

He said that Trafford College had "clearly demonstrated the maintenance of high-quality standards over a sustained period of time".

WMC had impressed CIFE with "the

quality of [its] strategic plan and its strong links with the community it serves".

Burton and South Derbyshire College was had meanwhile "forged strong relationships across the sector", and was "highly regarded by students and employers as a model training provider".

"I am delighted that WMC – The Camden College has achieved the distinction of being the first adult college in London to join the CIFE membership," said its principal Helen Hammond.

"This supports our 'outstanding' grade and recognises our continued efforts to ensure we are a learner-centred college dedicated to widening access to education for all adults across London.

We look forward to being part of this membership that recognises our commitment for providing high standards and opportunities for lifelong learning."

Ms Hammond said she hoped to encourage other colleges to join the CIFE "to show their level of excellence in education".

"We are delighted to have been awarded chartered status," added the principal of Trafford College, Lesley Davies.

"This accolade distinguishes us as a leading education provider and is a

testament to our vision of becoming a career college.

"At the heart of this vision is the dedication of our staff who work tirelessly to provide high-quality teaching and learning for our students so that they achieve their career goals as well as meeting the training needs of local employers."

Dawn Ward, the principal of Burton and South Derbyshire College, also spoke of her excitement.

"I am delighted that we are now a member of the chartered institution," she said. "It recognises the broad reach and scope within colleges such as ours and the impact we have on the local economy, how we help individuals develop the skills needed for successful careers and the wide-ranging work we undertake with employers helping them improve productivity by developing the skills of their workforce.

"Chartered institutions are also part of the landscape that employers understand, so having one that represents and celebrates further education really emphasises and communicates the valuable and important work done by so many in our sector."

A Freedom of Information request revealed last month that the CIFE had received more than £1 million in public subsidy, and was still being propped up to the tune of £210,000 a year.

Mr Wright responded to this by saying that his goal was to have 80 members, which would make it "completely free" of government subsidy.

Each prospective member pays a £3,000



Dan Wright

fee to have their application assessed – a process that involves a financial assessment as well as evaluation against the institution's quality criteria – and a further £5,000 a year in membership fees.

All four providers that joined a year or more ago confirmed they had renewed membership. These are Hawk Training, Blackpool and The Fylde College, Bridgewater & Taunton College, and Furness College, Cumbria.

East Riding College, Dudley College, Steadfast Training Ltd, and Skills Group all joined within the last 12 months, so do not need to renew membership.

EDITORIAL



A market ripe enough for change?

Employers are paying too much for their apprenticeships, according to the Department for Education.

Officials “expected” employers would negotiate prices below the relevant upper limit they set before April last year, and the Institute for Apprenticeships since then.

But instead many employers pay top whack as, apparently, “they do not feel able to negotiate with providers”.

So the DfE says it’s considering “alternative funding band structures”, along with “changes to incentivise negotiation and drive better value for money”.

My heart sinks when I hear major changes may be coming before the new apprenticeship market is properly up and running.

Having said that, where any market is failing, it is important the government steps in and regulates.

But is there enough reliable market intelligence to make changes that don’t simply create a new set of unintended consequences?

There are no easy answers for the DfE, but given we are less than 10 months into the infancy of a completely new market, no knee-jerk reactions either, please.

Nick Linford, Editor
news@feweek.co.uk

POST 18 EDUCATION REVIEW TWEETS:

David Lammy @DavidLammy

Theresa May promised parity of esteem between HE and technical education but the truth is that adult education is on its knees and govt approach is hopeless. Where are the night schools so that working people can reskill, support their families and fill the skills gaps?

Nick Boles MP @NickBoles

Introducing 2 year technical diplomas costing £5-6k a year is a much better way to fix the problem of the high cost of higher education than lowering tuition fees for bachelor degrees

Gordon Marsden @GordonMarsden

Behind the warm words & soft soap ladled out by PM in Derby & her education sec in Commons is no new money & potential HE funding cuts - a classic Con trick.

Steve Taylor @SteveTaylorArts

HE in FE is a key strand of overall HE provision and it is important that it is recognised for the role it plays, particularly for part-time and mature learners, and those who are seeking a supportive and educationally challenging learning environment



NCG welcomes move to campus-level inspection

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

The nation’s largest college group has welcomed a change in how it collects data on learners and it is expected to pave the way for campus-level Ofsted inspections.

NCG will introduce a new college “campus identifier” field into individualised learner records from 2018/19.

The data will identify a “campus within a college group” that is “no longer a separate legal entity”, according to Education and Skills Funding Agency guidance. The intention is to “allow identification of provision delivered across the various sites of merged institutions”.

Ofsted may use this information to launch new campus-level inspections from as early as next year. These would allow for reports on colleges that were previously independent, but which now sit within merged groups.

Neither Ofsted nor the Department for Education would say for certain that the new field was being introduced for this reason.

However a spokesperson for the inspectorate admitted to being in discussion with the DfE about campus-level inspections.

“We will consider it as part of the inspection of the whole college as we review the education inspection framework,” he said.

Joe Docherty, chief executive of Newcastle-based NCG, the country’s largest college

group, said moving to inspections of individual campuses was a “logical next step” that the group would “strongly welcome”.

He said NCG – which counts six FE and sixth-form colleges, and two independent providers, as members – had been “asking Ofsted to consider” grading each campus individually for two years.

“It’s vital for the communities we serve to ensure true transparency on performance – which in a group means campus-level inspection grades for the quality of provision,” he said.

He explained that NCG had been working on a pilot with the government to report data for each of its members separately.

“NCG data is due to be published at campus level for the first time in March 2018,” he added.

IT glitches related to the pilot have however meant that data from the group was missing from the 2015/16 achievement rate tables.

There was a long delay in the publication of NCG’s most recent Ofsted report, which finally appeared last September, a fact blamed on a dispute over the group’s achievement rate data.

The published data – described by the group as “misleading” – was for all the group’s members, when the inspection just covered the colleges, of which there were four at the time.

The new data field will mean colleges will have a year’s worth of campus-level data in

time for the new Ofsted common inspection framework, expected from September 2019.

The prospect of campus-level inspections was raised last March, during an FE Week interview with Ofsted boss Amanda Spielman and her deputy director for FE Paul Joyce.

They were asked if it was realistic to expect inspection teams to reach consistent verdicts on huge groups, which often encompass multiple learning bases across the country and have different priorities.

Ms Spielman conceded that “the most useful way of reporting on a large, diversified, multisite college is not necessarily the same as a smaller one”. Mr Joyce added that campus level inspections were being investigated with the DfE.

Frank Coffield, emeritus professor of education at UCL’s Institute of Education, also argued that “applying one summary term” to these huge colleges was “unjust”.

But David Corke, the director of policy at the Association of Colleges, was more cautious this week about campus-level inspections.

“Much more analysis needs to be done into what constitutes a campus, and there also needs to be more research conducted into what the complex practical implications will be during an inspection,” he said.

A DfE spokesperson would not say how the new ILR field relates to future inspections, but admitted it could “allow a granular level view of data for audit, funding and success rates”.

COMMENTS

Apprenticeship funding bands set to change

Employers are completely able to negotiate with suppliers on price. However an open-book costing approach which considers EPA cost, completion rate, risk, cohort size, expenses and 20-per-cent support usually leads to higher price than the cap. Usually the employer does not want to pay higher than the cap and hence the cap is settled on. It is microeconomics that is driving this rather than an unwillingness to negotiate. The ESFA should look at new profit margins in the sector and make a judgement if there is profiteering going on (I think I know the conclusion from this).

Andy Cheshire

Skills minister: Apprenticeship starts will surge by September

It’s possible that things will pick up with levy-paying organisations as they begin to face a “use it or lose it” situation. However, for small and micro businesses I see no prospect of a turnaround while the ESFA sticks to its rigid 20-per-cent off-the-job rule across the board.

Liam Ryan

I have just given myself a diary note for September to see who is right as this will never happen! What research has been done? Retail and hospitality? Honestly? Please tell us what companies in this sector can honestly comply with the 20-per-cent rule. Proper research means we providers talking to real employers, and we are not seeing such optimism.

Mr Disillusioned



Clerk to the Corporation



Hours per week: 15 hrs per week (0.4 full time equivalent)
Contract: Permanent
Department: Executive
Salary: Circa 45K (pro rata)

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Will be responsible to the Corporation for ensuring that their proceedings are conducted in accordance with the provisions of all relevant legislation/regulations and established guidance;

Will be accountable to the Corporation, through the Chair, on all matters relating to his or her duties as an officer of the Corporation;

Will support the Corporation and its members in evaluating their effectiveness; Will give advice on and make proposals to the Corporation on governance developments within the sector.

Closing Date: 9th March 2018

Interviews will be on the 29th March 2018

<http://www.calderdale.ac.uk/content/view/jobs/current-vacancies>

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Closing date: 6 March 2018

Salary: Various, see below

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Leading the development of qualifications, assessments, examinations in Health and Social Care.
- **Product Executive (two positions)**, £22,149
- Supporting product development activities, maintaining range of NOCN products.

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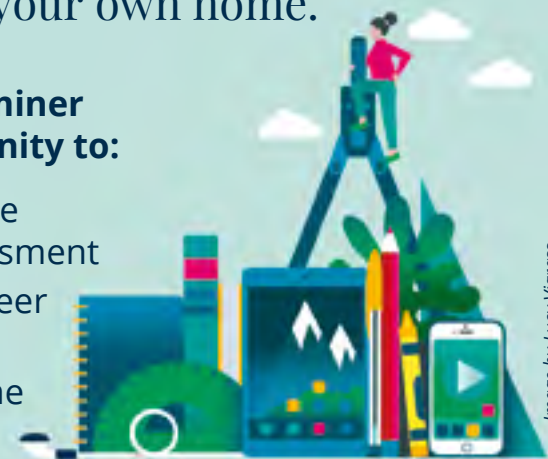


Image by Lucy Vigrass

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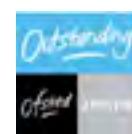
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Closing date: 12 noon Monday 5th March 2018

Interviews w/c 12th March 2018

Applications to Wendy Bloom, Swarthmore Education Centre,
2-7 Woodhouse Square, Leeds, LS3 1AD
wendy.bloom@swarthmore.org.uk



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Landex

Land Based Colleges
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(re-advertisement)

Starting salary at a point in the range £35,000 - £50,000 pa

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A full job description and recruitment pack for the vacancy can be downloaded from www.landex.org.uk

Potential applicants are welcome to discuss the position informally with the **Chief Executive**.

Tel. **01604 893550**

Closing date: Friday 16th March 2018.

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EDUCATION & TRAINING
FOUNDATION

We are looking for a first-class Operations Manager to play a pivotal role in building and developing the Education and Training Foundation's new Advanced Teacher Status (ATS), as well as supporting the continued growth of Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status.

The Operations Manager will:

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- Recruit, train and manage a team of reviewers and moderators who will assess ATS portfolio submissions
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- Manage the release and certification of ATS results and re-applications
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Reporting in to the Head of QTLS and ATS, you will play a key role working between the teams managing the Society for Education and Training, and our work on Professional Standards and Initial Teacher Education. If this sounds interesting, then please get in touch.

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- Degree or equivalent, plus a Level 5+ Initial Teacher Training qualification
- A proven track record in delivering high quality teaching and learning in the FE sector, with experience of delivering initial teacher education and CPD programmes
- Experience using candidate/learner databases, e-portfolio, VLE platforms and CRM systems
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FE Week



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Fabienne Bailey, Stockton Learning and Skills Service previous AAC delegate

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Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
Chair, Education Select Committee, House of Commons



Sir Gerry Berragan
CEO, Institute for Apprenticeships



Sir Vince Cable MP
Leader of Liberal Democrats

ICC, BIRMINGHAM | WED 22 - FRI 24 MARCH
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WE'RE DELIGHTED TO ANNOUNCE THAT BBC BROADCASTER & JOURNALIST, KIRSTY WARK, WILL BE RETURNING AS CONFERENCE CHAIR FOR 2018.



Image: BBC broadcaster & journalist Kirsty Wark chairing AAC Conference in 2017.

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EXPERTS



DAVID LAMMY

MP for Tottenham

Technical education doesn't need a review!

The prime minister is talking up technical education, but doesn't have the goods to back up her words, according to the former Labour skills minister David Lammy MP

I agree with the prime minister in that the public debate on tertiary education has been dominated in the last few decades by higher education and universities, with nothing like the same level of attention paid to technical education, further education or the 50 per cent of young people who don't go on to university.

But I would find it much easier to believe the government's new-found commitment to "parity of esteem" between university and technical education if FE budgets had not been cut back to the bone since 2010.

We don't need a review; we need fair funding and stability so colleges and providers know what their budgets are going to be from one year to the next. It was only 18 months ago that I led a campaign in Parliament to force a government U-turn on cuts of up to 50 per cent of 16- to 18-year-old apprentices, including hundreds of young people in my own constituency studying at the College of North East London.

The truth is that technical education has always been seen as the poor sibling of university, both by policymakers and cabinet ministers who overwhelmingly went to our top universities, who want their own children to follow in their footsteps and who see a degree as the only route to success. Parity of esteem is impossible to achieve in these circumstances.

The university obsession of the political and media class lets down every young person who doesn't follow the conveyor-belt model of A-levels, a Russell Group university degree and a graduate job. Are there any newspaper editors or ministers telling their own children to do an apprenticeship instead of a university degree?

For far too many in the Westminster bubble, the term "social mobility" simply means giving other people an opportunity to become more like them and their own ideas of success in life. Overwhelmingly, this model of success is a university degree and a white-collar job in an office.

Not only is this patronising, it's plain wrong.

We need to look around us and call out this university obsession. Half of all debt-saddled graduates are taking non-graduate jobs in coffee shops, bars and retail, while

those with a top technical qualifications are highly sought after by employers and can earn a fortune as an engineer, a coder or a programmer.

Germany is consistently cited as an example of a productive, strong economy and it is no coincidence they are streets ahead of us on technical skills, with a dual model of tertiary education and outstanding provision of high-level technical education.

“**Technical education has always been seen as the poor sibling of university**”

Apprenticeship numbers fell by 59 per cent following the imposition of the government's levy. The government's obsession with quantity instead of quality in hitting a target of three million starts by 2020 means that far too many of our young people are doing low-skill apprenticeships instead of the higher-level ones that will give them the skills they need to get on in life.

The number of adults (students aged 24+) enrolled on courses at level three or above has fallen by almost a fifth since 2010.

After significant pressure in the run-up to the budget, the government announced a £10 million flexible learning fund to support adult education – hardly the foundation for a revolution in night schools that would enable thousands of adults in former industrial heartlands and coastal downs to retrain.

The elephant in the room when it comes to any discussion of the state of our technical skills sector is of course Brexit, and in particular the hard Brexit that this government is determined to pursue. If the government is so determined to take us out of the single market and slash immigration, then where is the urgency about what comes next?

Who is going to do the jobs? Who is going to fill the skills gaps? Are we going to skill up our own people to drive our economy forwards post-Brexit? How? When? These are the questions that the prime minister's speech hinted at but failed to answer.



MANDIE STRAVINO

CEO, Derby College Group

The post-18 review will prove the worth of college HE offers

Derby College Group's historic Roundhouse campus was chosen by the Prime Minister's Office to host the announcement of a major review into post-18 education. Here, DCG's chief executive Mandie Stravino reacts to the announcement and explains why the involvement of FE is a crucial part of the overall review

When we were approached by the Department for Education and the Prime Minister's Office to host the announcement, we were surprised, as it is unusual for something of this magnitude to happen at a college.

But I think that it recognises the broad range of high-quality work that the FE sector provides and the positive impact that it has on social mobility across our communities.

The fact that Derby is one of the government's opportunity areas, which focus on increasing social mobility through improvements in education, made it even more pertinent.

It also raised the profile of the breadth, flexibility and vocational strength of the higher education offer from the FE sector, which is too often invisible to potential learners and the wider outside world.

The reality is that colleges' HE offers provide incredible technical options and affordable alternatives to people at whatever stage of life, whether they are looking to enter the workplace or progress their careers.

Following the announcement, three of our HE students, who are combining work with studying, had the opportunity to meet the PM. They have come to us from a mixture of employers from SMEs to global engineering companies – all of which are the bedrock of our regional economy.

The students articulated superbly the value they are gaining from the tripartite relationship between the individual, the employer and the college, which has enabled them to benefit from HE while working.

All three are studying qualifications that are relevant to their current jobs and their career aspirations. Their employers recognise the benefit of highly-skilled staff who have the drive and ambition to contribute to their own growth through the skills that they learn.

The broad range of offer through FE effectively enables young people of all abilities – even those who join us at basic entry level – to be inspired and flourish, and to work their way through to degree level work.

The fees we charge make HE accessible, including those young people wanting to stay closer to home, and to those who come

to us while employed, who have the added advantage of earning as they learn and not incurring debt as they may have done through going the university route.

Mrs May spoke at length of the need to give the same recognition and value of vocational/technical higher education as academic routes.

FE's specialisms and proven expertise in technical/vocational routes are further expanded at higher education level and should not be underestimated by this review.

I applaud the fact that the government is prepared to review post-18 education as a whole – whether at college or university – and recognise that, together, the system has something for everyone.

“**Colleges' HE offers provide incredible technical options and affordable alternatives to people at whatever stage of life**”

I would also urge the reviewers to include employer feedback, as it is employers who sponsor many students in FE.

We work with around 3,000 local, regional and national employers in a number of ways – including the co-design and co-delivery or our curriculum – whether it's full-time, part-time or work-based, or an apprenticeship.

By listening to and working alongside employers, we ensure that our curriculum is responsive and relevant to the skills required by businesses and organisations both now and in the future.

Let us hope that the broad scope of this review will take all aspects of higher education into consideration including apprenticeships, access and foundation courses – recognising that all routes are valuable, will provide the skills needed by employers, and give everyone the opportunity to realise their career ambitions.

FE continues to have a vitally important role to play in this debate and, by actively participating in the review, this is an opportunity for the sector to gain the recognition it deserves.

EXPERTS

Colleges have been warned they will lose funding if they don't meet the Gatsby career benchmarks by 2020. Sir John Holman, who wrote them, explains what steps colleges need to take

Good career guidance has never been more important for college students, with the new technical education routes on their way and apprenticeships growing in status. Good guidance provides support to those navigating this changing landscape, and they're critical for social mobility too, by helping open students' eyes to careers they may never have considered.

In 2013 I was impatient with the criticism of career guidance in English colleges and schools. With colleagues from the University of Derby and backing from the Gatsby Foundation, I carried out an international study, a literature review, a national survey and a costing exercise to delineate what world-class career guidance looks like. This resulted in the eight Gatsby benchmarks.

1. A stable careers programme
2. Learning from career and labour market information
3. Addressing the needs of each student
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers
5. Encounters with employers and employees
6. Experiences of workplaces
7. Encounters with further and higher education
8. Personal guidance

The benchmarks are undoubtedly challenging to achieve in full; they've been crafted using the very best practice we've seen across the globe. To ensure that what we envisaged was achievable, we began a



SIR JOHN HOLMAN

Senior education adviser,
the Gatsby Foundation

What colleges need to know to meet the careers requirements

two-year pilot in 2015 which included three FE colleges in north-east England. The results were clear: the benchmarks work. After two years, 88 per cent of the schools and colleges involved in the pilot were reaching six to eight. At the start of the pilot, no school or college managed more than three.

Each of the benchmarks has further detail that enables colleges to measure whether they are meeting it, which you can read in Gatsby's benchmarks for colleges booklet. In September 2018, the Careers and Enterprise Company will be launching a new, college-focused version of a self-audit tool called 'compass', that colleges can use to measure themselves against these standards.

The pilot showed that the same set of benchmarks can be used for both colleges and secondary schools – and it confirmed the value of having a consistent set of measures

across both sectors. It also showed us that a careers leader, the senior member of staff accountable for the delivery of a careers strategy, is critical to both schools and colleges.

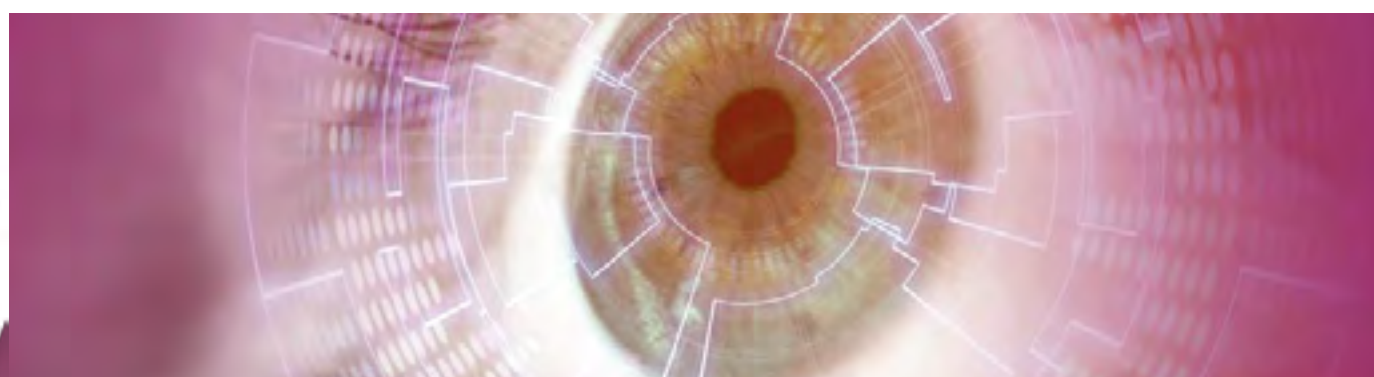
But the colleges told us the benchmarks needed a few subtle changes to make them completely appropriate for their needs: for example, the original benchmark five asks for an encounter with an employer every year. Colleges told us that with the world of work approaching, it needs to be more frequent than this. We consulted with colleges more widely across the country and as a result we've produced a modified set of Gatsby benchmarks for colleges.

The Gatsby benchmarks have been adopted as the organising framework for the Department for Education's careers strategy, published in late 2017. In February 2018, the

DfE published guidance for colleges, which uses the modified set of benchmarks, and it has since requested that every college name a designated careers leader by September 2018. The Careers and Enterprise Company will also be expanding its support for colleges across all eight benchmarks, building on its successful enterprise coordinator programme.

“After two years, 88 per cent of the schools and colleges involved in the pilot were reaching six to eight of the benchmarks

Judging by our experiences in the north-east, colleges will find it valuable to have a clear, nationally-defined framework to work within. As Vikkie Morton, an assistant principal at Sunderland College, said: “We don't need telling how important career guidance is for our students – we know that. What the Gatsby benchmarks give us is a clear framework for action. We know what we have to do, and we can measure how well we are doing it.”



AELP Technology Conferences 2018

Technology in Education and Training continues to advance and there are many new opportunities for the Further Education sector to embrace and harness with a real opportunity to have a coherent end to end technology solution for the delivery of high quality education and training.

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- » Delivering programmes more effectively
- » Raising standards and achievements
- » Improving their profile and reputation with employer organisations
- » Securing a competitive advantage over other providers

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etc. venues, Manchester

Thursday, 29 March 2018
Conference Aston - Aston
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Monday, 23 July 2018
Ashton Gate Stadium,
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CEME Conference Centre,
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FE Week

CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King*



Plane sailing: Marking the project's launch

Lift off for eco-project

Blackburn College is developing more eco-friendly ways of powering aircraft vehicles.

A two-year research project will look at ways of converting wasted heat into power, with the college working in partnership with the National Aerospace Technology Programme, which is funding the research.

Students from across the college's engineering, electrics, plumbing and art and design courses at both FE and HE level will be involved, assisting with designing and making a prototype thermo-electric power source.

"Work on the thermo-electric prototype, fabrication and design will involve students across a number of disciplines," said Nicola Clayton, the college's director of business

development and external engagement.

"This project offers a fantastic collaboration between education and industry which will provide students with knowledge and experience of cutting edge technologies."

"Current energy technologies for aircraft are constrained to batteries, which are expensive and can pose fire risks," added the project's lead, Savros Kindylides, the managing director of EU Eco Technologies.

"Our project aims to replace battery technology, improve the environmental impacts of air travel and create more hybrid-electric aircraft."

Other project partners include Cranfield University, Innovation Works and Systems, BAE Systems, HIVE Business Network and the Northwest Aerospace Alliance.

Learning the business of charity



The Salvation Army team: Patryk, Lauren and Liam

Six charity shops in Suffolk will be taken over by college students in an effort to increase their takings.

Level three business and retail learners studying at West Suffolk College will occupy the shops from February 26 to March 2, using their business, visual merchandising and social media skills to encourage more people to visit.

The teams have already scoped out their stores and made plans for the shop-floor layout and window displays.

The students will be working in local

branches of EACH, Suffolk Age UK, St Nicholas Hospice Care, Barnado's, Cancer Research UK and the Salvation Army during the project, and will compete amongst themselves to see which of the six groups raises the most for their shop.

"We may be a charity shop, but we work just the same as mainstream retail to achieve targets and budgets," said Bev Pepper, store manager of Barnardo's in St Johns Street.

"This will give the students an eye opener to how we work to raise money for our amazing children's services and beyond."

Make a teacher's day



Gratitude with attitude: The thank-you cards

Learners have been sending thank-you cards to their favourite former high school teachers, as part of a college's mental health and wellbeing programme.

Students at Birkenhead Sixth-Form College have been writing to their old teachers at secondary schools across the Wirral to thank them for their support and share their own achievements post-16.

The cards were sent as part of the college's BePART (Be Positive, Ambitious, Resilient, Thoughtful) programme, devised by psychologists within the staff, which encourages healthy eating habits, teaches relaxation techniques and boosts students'

overall wellbeing.

"Showing gratitude has been proven to make a significant impact on a person's outlook on life, and such a simple thing can go a long way," said Mike Kilbride, the college principal. "It's such a show of appreciation for the entire teaching profession and proves that what we all do, day-in and day-out, matters so much to the next generation."

One student got in touch with their former English teacher at Woodchurch High School to say: "I believe everyone has a teacher who they always remember because of the impact they had on them. You are that teacher to me. Thank you for everything."



Pushing the right buttons: Computing students with Damian Hinds

Damian Hinds does the robo-boogie

The new education secretary encountered dancing robots and learned about cybersecurity during his first official visit to a further education college.

Damian Hinds visited New City College Hackney on February 9 to find out more about digital and tech education, and met students on games design, media and computing courses.

As part of his visit, Mr Hinds was shown how computing students had programmed robots to dance, and watched 2D and 3D animations made by the college's aspiring games designers.

To round off his trip, the college presented

him with a framed print of a Transport for London Elizabeth Line advert, designed by the college's own graphic design learners, and which are currently displayed in train carriages across London.

"Like Mr Hinds, we are passionate about providing students with the very best opportunities to progress to strong careers and we are encouraged that FE is high on his agenda," said Gerry McDonald, principal and CEO of the college group. "We are grateful to the Minister for taking the time to see such a good range of our students' excellent work, and to hear from them about their studies and ambitions."

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

Activism? There's a course for that

Eleven colleges are offering their students the chance to train as activists as part of a programme run by the National Union of Students and Friends of the Earth, reports Samantha King.

Operating in colleges in the east Midlands, Bristol, London and south Wales, the My World, My Home project gives learners the chance to gain the OCNLR level three award in community campaigning, and make a positive environmental change at their college through planning and executing their own campaigns over the course of six months.

"Working with young people is absolutely crucial – they're the future of the environmental movement, and it's a really great opportunity for them to develop new skills," said Laura McFarlane-Shopes, community activism coordinator at Friends of the Earth, a major environmental charity.

"They're learning the essential campaigning training, and making a really big impact on their local areas. I think equally the project has a huge effect on their confidence and their ability to manage projects. It's a project management course in some ways."

So far on the programme, participating learners have strived for a plastic-free college and campaigned for a more frequent bus service to and from their college, by taking 72 Double Decker chocolate bars with messages



Aspiring activists learn the ropes on a training weekend

written on them to their bus operator, which agreed to meet them.

The initiative has received £999,074 funding from the National Lottery's Big Lottery Fund which will enable it to reach 160 college learners at Richmond Upon Thames College, Newham Sixth Form, Newham College, City and Islington College, Nottingham College, Derby College, West Notts College, City of Bristol College, Bridgend College, Gwent College and Coleg y Cymoedd.

The funding, which is delivered through the Our Bright Future programme, provides for weekly meetings with Friends of the Earth, and one-to-one sessions every fortnight.

"It's a deliberately intensive programme, working with a small number of students," said Ms McFarlane-Shopes. "It is quite a rare opportunity as many funders do want big numbers, but Our Bright Future seems to really appreciate that it takes real time and investment to train and coach young people at this stage in their campaigning journey to achieve this kind of personal and environmental transformation."

The NUS and Friends of the Earth are hoping to extend the project to more colleges in the near future, and are encouraging interested colleges to get in touch with either organisation.



Doing what's bus-t for the environment

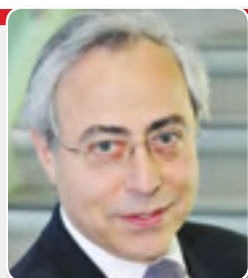


Campaigning for cleaner air at No 10

"It's incredible being able to bring together young people who might not ever come across environmental movement or environmental campaigning, and be able to provide a programme that's really useful for them in a really practical sense for university or employment," Ms McFarlane-Shopes added.

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



Peter Manford

Chair of governors, Warwickshire College Group

Start date February 2018

Previous job

Head of Commercial, Higgs & Sons Solicitors (ongoing)

Interesting fact

Peter enjoys photography, cars, skiing and (occasionally) keeping fit.



Antonia Evans

Joint headteacher, Sir Simon Milton Westminster UTC

Start date February 2018

Previous job

Assistant principal, Sir Simon Milton Westminster UTC

Interesting fact

Antonia did Teach First straight after graduating and has always wanted to work in education.



Adam Rogers

Principal of sixth-form, Ada, National College for Digital Skills

Start date January 2018

Previous job

Vice-principal, Ada, National College for Digital Skills

Interesting fact

Adam has a reputation with students and staff for telling "dad jokes", and knows more cheese-related gags than you would brie-leave.



Ian Peake

Principal, North Shropshire College

Start date February 2018

Previous job

Principal and chief executive, Herefordshire and Ludlow College

Interesting fact

Ian has enjoyed being involved in sustaining and improving further education in predominantly rural Herefordshire and Shropshire.



Jeremy Scorer

Principal, HIT Training Licensed Retail Academy

Start date October 2017

Previous job

Managing partner, Charnwood Training

Interesting fact

Jeremy was the youngest pub tenant in the whole of Nottingham when he and his wife ran their first pub at the age of 24.

Movers & Shakers

...

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



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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

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next edition

Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

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: Helen Allsop