FE Week

MILTON: WE'RE NOT PROPPING UP FAILURE

PAGES 7 AND 12

OFSTED MAKE GRADE 2 SAVING

PAGE 8

EX-ADVISER LAYS INTO THE LEVY

PAGE 8

REVEALED: THE 441 PROVIDERS THAT LEFT £73M AEB UNSPENT

- **Association of Colleges blames 'restrictive' rules and low funding rates for shortfall last year**
- **ESFA quietly offers colleges ways to soften impact of another allocation shortfall in 2017/18**

Exclusive investigation JUDE BURKE @JUDEBURKE77 See page 9

Last year's highest-paid principal? 'Bumper' £67k increase took Matt Hamnett to £294,000

Exclusive JUDE BURKE @JUDEBURKE77 See page 5

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Edition 240

Moulton College boss out after inspectors brand it as 'unsafe and sloppy'

Page 4

CITB finds most Carillion apprentices new employers

Page 6

Catholic SFCs demand protections before academisation window closes

Page 7

Contributors

ANNE MILTON

Page 16

PROFESSOR EWART KEEP

Page 16

JO MAHER

Page 17

FEATURED CAMPUS ROUND-UP

Page 19

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NEWS

Repayments for 100s of loans scandal victims deferred to next April


Sector leaders and key political figures including Gordon Marsden (centre) at the campaign's parliamentary launch

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

EXCLUSIVE

Debt repayments from hundreds of victims of an FE loans scandal have been deferred for another 12 months.

FE Week has been coordinating a campaign to have the advanced learning loan debt written off for blameless former learners whose training providers folded unexpectedly and who have been unable to finish their courses – often leaving them owing thousands of pounds.

The government still refuses to cancel the loans outright, but the Student Loans Company has now deferred repayments until April next year.

"Following instruction from Department for Education, we have written to those students affected advising that their repayments have been deferred for the tax year 2018/19," said a spokesperson.

Repayments had already been delayed for 12 months until the end of March 2018, under the pressure exerted by our #SaveOurAdultEducation campaign.

FE Week reported last September that just 112 of the 344 students affected by the collapse in 2016 and 2017 of John Frank Training, Edudo, and Focus Training, had been transferred to other providers.

SAVE OUR ADULT EDUCATION

As of February this year, just 17 more had been found alternative providers.

This means that the rest still have loans debt, some of which have topped £8,000, but no prospect of completing their qualifications.

A further 10 learners were left in the lurch when a fourth provider went bust in the summer of 2016, FE Week has learned.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency said it has "no record" of learners from Pursuit Training Ltd transferring to other training providers to complete their course.

The letters confirming the latest 12-month deferment were only sent to former learners last month.

Shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden has been lobbying the government to write the loans off through Parliament, and insisted this must still happen.

"Whilst this action is a start, it is not acceptable as a proper solution to what has happened to these learners," he said.

"It still leaves them with uncertainty and worries over what happens with their loans, which the DfE has still failed to address or write off."

FE Week has been demanding action since January last year. Asim Shaheen, 50, is one of the former John Frank Training learners who was unable to complete his qualification but who still owes £8,000.

The ESFA offered to send him to South Cheshire College to complete his training at the time, but this wasn't viable because it is over 20 miles from where he lives.

He still feels that he has been "left completely in the lurch" and thinks the ESFA and SLC should have updated him and other former learners much earlier on what was happening with their loans for the upcoming financial year. "There's no way that we should not be left with loans if there's nothing to show for it," he added.

'Last resort' IfA quality-assures almost half of all standards

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

The Institute for Apprenticeships is now the external quality-assurance provider for a massive 45 per cent of all fully-approved apprenticeship standards, even though it sees itself as the option of last resort.

This makes it by far the most popular option among employer groups developing the new apprenticeships, through a service provided on its behalf by Open Awards, whose contract has just been extended by six months from its original March end-date.

"We have a contract in place with Open Awards to deliver EQA on our behalf until September 2018," an IfA spokesperson told FE Week.

The institute has been keeping this provision "under review" and would "assess these arrangements" nearer the end of the contract period, she said.

EQA is the process that ensures apprenticeship assessments are consistent and reliable, and that they deliver the right outcomes.

The IfA is one of four options from which employer groups can choose to provide this service.

According to the Department for Education's strategic guidance, published in April 2017, the IfA was originally intended to be chosen "only in instances where alternatives are not viable".

According to the latest Education and Skills Funding Agency figures, the IfA is named on 113 fully-approved standards.

That's almost as many as the other options combined: 49 standards name the employer-designed model, while Ofqual is named on 33 and a professional body is named on 31 standards.

One standard names a professional body partnered with the exams regulator, and the Quality Assurance Agency, which regulates some degree apprenticeships, is named on eight standards.

A further 19 standards are yet to have a named EQA provider.

The IfA's share of the market has more than doubled since FE Week reported on the issue in August last year, when it stood at 19 per cent.

A spokesperson denied that the IfA was worried by its popularity, and insisted it was "focused on delivering a high-quality service for our customers".

The IfA is in "regular dialogue" with Open Awards "to ensure that they have the resources in place to deliver EQA".

"We are confident that the current arrangements are appropriate and sufficient. We will continue to review our model for delivering EQA and the resource behind this as end-point assessment numbers continue to grow," the spokesperson insisted.

NEWS

Moulton College boss out after inspectors brand it as 'unsafe and sloppy'


Moulton College's main campus in Moulton village

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

EXCLUSIVE

The principal of a Northamptonshire college has resigned after it was labelled "unsafe" by Ofsted in a damning grade four report.

Stephen Davies stepped down from Moulton College this week in the wake of a shocking report, which said learners, including those with high needs, were in danger.

He took on the job in 2011 when the specialist land-based college was rated 'outstanding', but it has since seen a gradual decline in standards to the bottom.

The FE commissioner Richard Atkins is understood to have been urgently summoned in to ensure the college is a safe place to learn.

"Following its disappointing recent Ofsted inspection, Moulton College's principal Stephen Davies has offered his resignation, which has been accepted by the board of governors," the college told FE Week.

"Both parties have reached an amicable settlement which allows an orderly separation at the end of April, and the board wishes Stephen well."

Despite the situation, Mr Davies said he was "proud" of his time at the college and the "foundations that have put in place for recovery are being evidenced by improved outcomes for our students".

"However, the time is now right for the college to look towards a different leadership approach, so I will relinquish my post with effect from April 30," he added.

"I feel honoured and privileged to have worked with such a brilliant group of staff whose hard work and commitment has helped to change the lives of many thousands of young people and adults."

Moulton College has onsite accommodation and delivers programmes in "highly dangerous vocational areas" such as construction, equine studies animal management, sport, and food and drink manufacturing.

Inspectors found a "number of serious breaches" to health and safety regulations and a number of instances where practice was "unsafe or sloppy".

"For example, brickwork learners do not wear appropriate eyewear when cutting bricks, and staff do not adequately supervise students with complex needs during water-based activities in the swimming pool," the report stated.


Stephen Davies

In equine yards, gates were "left open" and a teacher "demonstrated unsafe practice" when tacking up a horse.

Mr Davies said in a statement last week that his team had moved quickly ensure effective safeguards were being put in place to protect learners.

But the mounting pressure against him following a turbulent seven years in charge appears to have left him with no option but to resign.

In the short term, Moulton's deputy principal Gerald Davies will step up as acting principal, and the board will "seek to appoint an experienced interim principal as soon as practicable".

Moulton College fell to a grade three in 2016 from grade one.

It also ran into financial difficulties during his time in post. It has a turnover of around £25 million but got a financial notice of concern from the ESFA in January 2017.

At the time its bank loans totalled nearly £20 million after it made significant investment to improve the college estate.

Moulton was subsequently subject to intervention from the FE commissioner – whose report found leaders had been "too slow" to address poor financial performance.

However, its financial health went back to 'satisfactory' at the end of July.

In the college's Ofsted report Moulton was branded 'inadequate' overall, and in four of the eight headline fields, including for its large apprenticeships provision – meaning it will become the second college to lose the right to offer them under updated government rules.

Ofsted welcomes consultation on college group inspections

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

Ofsted has welcomed a new government consultation to "strengthen" public reporting on the performance of college groups which have multiple sites.

The Department for Education launched a nine-week consultation on April 10, which is expected to pave the way for more local inspections.

An Ofsted spokesperson said the inspectorate was looking forward to the outcome, and that while it intends to continue reporting on colleges at corporation level, "as part of our review of the common inspection framework, we are considering the potential for us to report at campus level within an overall college inspection".

The consultation seeks views on two proposals.

The first is on the introduction of separate performance reporting for colleges that are part of a group.

"That would mean that performance information was available for all colleges, irrespective of whether they were part of a group or not," the consultation document stated.

Secondly, the DfE is options on separate


Department for Education

Performance reporting for FE college groups and multi-site colleges

Government consultation

Launch date 10 April 2018
Respond by 10 June 2018

reporting for multiple sites that are part of the same college.

"That would provide greater transparency on the quality of local provision, alongside performance information relating to the college as a whole," it said.

The consultation is addressing growing concerns over difficulties faced by Ofsted in particular when reporting fairly on huge provider groups following mergers. Disparate campuses can be situated long distances apart and specialise in different types of provision.

The DfE's consultation page explained that changes in the "structure of the sector" have "implications for how well the existing performance reporting system now works, including the information that is available to learners, support for local accountability, and quality improvement".

It states that a corporation must remain as the accountable body "however large or complex its activities, and wherever its provision is delivered".


Joe Docherty

The process is designed in support of existing educational performance measures, such as achievement rates, progress measures, learner destinations and outcomes.

It does not propose any changes to the measures themselves.

Other, non-educational performance measures, such as financial indicators, are also not in scope, and no changes are proposed to the current system for allocation of funding.

The ESFA recently announced that there will be a new college campus identifier added to individualised learner records from 2018/19.

It intends to "allow identification of provision delivered across the various sites of merged institutions".

The nation's largest college group is in favour of a move to campus level inspections. Joe Docherty, the chief executive of Newcastle-based NCG, said moving to inspections of individual campuses was a "logical next step" that the group would "strongly welcome".

He has told FE Week that NCG, which counts as members six FE and sixth-form colleges, and two independent providers, 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.

The DfE's consultation proposals apply to both general and specialist FE colleges, as well as sixth-form colleges. It closes on June 10. Views can be submitted by visiting https://bit.ly/2HrxbI4.

NEWS

Principal's £300k salary at £30m college causes furious union reaction

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

EXCLUSIVE FROM FRONT

The leader of a college with an annual turnover of just £30 million was paid almost £300,000 in 2016/17 – a £68,000 increase and nearly double the sector average.

Matt Hamnett's huge pay packet last year has probably made him the highest-paid principal in the country at the time, provoking a furious reaction from the University and College Union.

He was paid £294,000 on top of a £47,000 pension contribution and benefits in kind worth £1,000 last year, according to North Hertfordshire College's financial statements – or just over one per cent of its entire turnover.

Mr Hamnett stepped down from his role in November, but a college spokesperson said his salary was justified, as "Matt led us to a strong position".

She stressed that the payment "included a one-off payment of accrued benefits and significant performance-related measures, earnt due to the success of our turnaround".

These included a grade two Ofsted inspection in November, up from the previous grade three, and improvements in the college's achievement rates for the year.

Its overall apprenticeship achievement went up from 60 per cent in 2015/16 to 64.7 per cent in 2016/17, while its overall education and training achievement rate went up from 80.2 per cent to 86.4 per cent in the same time period.

The sum paid to Mr Hamnett – which is £68,000 more than he received in 2015/16 – is larger than the salaries paid to the bosses of the country's two largest college groups, and dwarfs the average salary for a principal of a college the size of North Hertfordshire.

NCG boss Joe Docherty was paid £227,000, plus a £33,000 pension contribution and an £11,000 bonus and benefits in kind worth £10,000, while John Thornhill, chief executive of the LTE Group, which includes Manchester College, earned £221,000 over the year plus a £36,000 pension contribution, according to the groups' accounts.

But NCG's income was almost £128 million and the LTE Group took in £184 million – whereas North Hertfordshire College's turnover was just £30 million.

The average principal salary for a college of this size was £148,000 in 2015/16, according to figures included in the college accounts published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

The UCU, which has recently held a series of strikes in colleges across the country over pay, has been spitting feathers.

Lydia Richard, a regional official, said his "bumper pay deal" was " totally out of step" with both staff pay and that of other principals.

She demanded "greater transparency and accountability" in principal pay decision-making, adding: "The huge disparities between institutions when it comes to principal pay highlights the arbitrary nature of how it's awarded."

Mr Hamnett was appointed head of the college, which trades under the name Hart Learning Group, in March 2015.

He has also been director of group sales at Capita and a senior consultant at PwC, and spent over seven years as a senior civil servant.

ESFA accounts show his North Hertfordshire predecessor, Signe Sutherland, received a salary of £162,000 in 2013/14.

But records for Mr Hamnett's first full year, 2015/16, show he received a salary of £227,000 in the same role for the year.

This increased again the following year, to £295,000.

The college's turnover had actually gone down slightly, by around eight per cent, during Mr Hamnett's two and a half years at the helm – from £32.6 million in 2014/15.


Matt Hamnett

He stepped down as principal at the end of August, but continued as chief executive of the group – which also includes Hart Learning and Development and a school trust – until his resignation on November 30.

When asked to justify his salary, Mr Hamnett told FE Week he had "delivered rapid and significant improvements over the course of my time".

"We made big changes, and they worked," he said, referring to the college's recent Ofsted report.

"I am proud of the part I played in the group's transformation."

NEWS

ESFA finally sends out subcontracting fees template to providers

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has finally sent providers long-delayed templates to let them declare their subcontracting fees.

Individual lead providers previously had to publish their annual figures by the end of every November every year. But the rules changed for 2016/17, and providers are now expected to inform the ESFA of their figures, which are then meant to be published centrally.

The agency came in for criticism as November passed last year, without any indication of when the templates would be sent out, or when the full figures would be revealed.

It has finally provided an update on the situation.

"All providers that 'provision subcontracted' last year have been contacted by email," it said in its weekly bulletin.

"If you provision subcontracted for adult education last year, you need to submit the template that we sent to you to the ESFA fees and charges mailbox by 5pm on Friday, April 27."

FE Week reported in January that the education select committee chair Robert Halfon had demanded action on what he described as "deeply worrying" delays.

He told the ESFA to collect the data "immediately" so it "can be collated and we can see them", shortly after government admitted it would not publish the subcontracting fees in time for parliamentary inquiry hearings into concerns about the system, by both the Commons education and public accounts committees.

"The taxpayer should have the exact information readily available as soon as possible, as to how much money is being creamed off," Mr Halfon insisted.

Subcontracting management fees have been a source of mounting controversy, reaching as much as 40 per cent, as was infamously levied in some cases by Learndirect.

Lead providers often claim the fees are needed to cover administrative costs, but many in the sector believe that too much money is being diverted from frontline learning.

The ESFA has also said that subcontracting fees and charges are to be reviewed to ensure government funding is being used for "recognised costs".

Topslice criticism for college given extra £1.6 million

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

EXCLUSIVE

The college that topped the funding tables during the adult education budget procurement has been awarded an extra £1.6 million for growth – even though it plans to subcontract it all with hefty top-slices.

Independent providers, forced for the first time to tender for all their AEB funding, were aghast in November after FE Week revealed that a sizeable £5.2 million portion of the total £110 million was shared among 19 colleges.

The biggest winner was Eastleigh College, which is one of the largest prime subcontractors in the country.

It was awarded £1.18 million in November, on top of the £8.34 million it gets in non-procured AEB funding. FE Week can now reveal that it has gained an extra £1.6 million from the AEB tender this month.

To add insult to injury, it has only applied for the funds to subcontract out the provision, using what is likely to be its standard 22.5-per-cent top-slice.

The chair of the education select committee, Robert Halfon, hit out at the situation.

"Providers who subcontract training and take a hefty cut of public funds deliver little of value and the money could be better spent on teaching people vital workplace skills to benefit themselves and the economy," he said.

Board minutes from November show that Eastleigh's principal, Dr Jan Edrich, was "pleased to inform governors that a growth bid of £1.6 million had been made to the AEB, which the college will subcontract".

A spokesperson confirmed this week the bid was "successful". She added that the cash has been used to "fund and deliver both local and national skills priorities which is in direct response to employer and learner demand".

Eastleigh, rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted, received over £21 million from the government for apprenticeships and adult funding last year, but directly delivered just shy of £4 million (18 per cent). The remaining £17 million was subcontracted out, with a 22.5-per-cent management fee.

In total, this fee was close to £4 million – the same as its entire directly funded provision.

Minutes from a May 2016 board meeting make clear that management fees from subcontracting increase the college's surplus.

The college subcontracted its AEB provision to 15 different providers last year.

FE Week analysis of national achievement rate data for 2016/17 shows that 62 per cent of Eastleigh's AEB enrolments were delivered outside their local enterprise partnership in Hampshire.

The ESFA has however been telling providers that they should be moving away from national subcontracting as AEB moves towards devolution.

"I would expect to see less subcontracting as funding is put in the hands of users or allocated more locally," former skills minister Nick Boles told the ESFA in a letter in December 2015.

Eastleigh said it is "well aware" of the devolution agenda, and that it has a "strategy in place to manage the policy change".

Simon Ashworth, the chief policy officer at the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, said the scale of Eastleigh's delivered provision is "significantly weighted" on subcontracting.

"Certainly the recent reforms and new rules were supposed to be moving the sector away from managing agency-type models, and the ESFA should be giving the taxpayer better value for money by contracting much more with those providers who can deliver for themselves," he told FE Week.

Eastleigh College	Total funding	College delivery	College delivery	Subcontracted	Top-slice	
AEB	£8,691,243	£1,578,290	18%	£7,112,953	£1,600,414.54	22.5%
Appren	£13,079,072	£2,420,039	19%	£10,659,033	£2,381,819.80	22.3%
Total	£21,770,315	£3,998,328	18%	£17,771,986	£3,982,234	22.4%

CITB finds most Carillion apprentices new employers

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

Almost three quarters of the apprentices left jobless following the collapse of Carillion have secured new employment, following an "extraordinary effort" by the construction industry over the last month.

At first, 700 were offered alternative apprenticeships by the end of January, after the outsourcing giant entered liquidation on the 15th. But attempts to move more than 400 others stalled throughout February and early March, after it proved difficult to match them with companies close enough to where they live.

The Construction Industry Training Board has now cleared the bottleneck, and 824, or 72 per cent, of the 1,148 apprentices have moved on.

"The industry has well and truly rallied together, offering 1,600 job opportunities to affected apprentices," said the CITB's Gillian Cain, which has assumed responsibility for finding alternative employers.

She added that while not all of these opportunities have "met the needs of the apprentices", there are 200 more relevant vacancies remaining, and the CITB is working hard to secure more.

The CITB is continuing its matching service for another 100 of the remaining apprentices who are still engaging with the process. A further 224 have not responded to various attempts to contact them.

The success in sourcing new work for the apprentices has been put down to cash incentives of £1,000 which are being offered to employers.

The payments are part of a £1.4 million package that sees firms receive £500 up front, and a further £500 after six months if they've retained the displaced trainees.

Ms Cain said that while the additional incentive "may have helped", the majority of companies offering jobs have done so "out of a genuine desire to help the affected apprentices and we are incredibly grateful to all those who have".

Carillion was the UK's largest employer of construction apprentices before it went into liquidation in January.

It was originally estimated that around 1,400 learners trained at the company's skills division, Carillion Training Services, had been affected by the collapse.

However, this figure included recent finishers who were looking for a new employer. The true number of affected apprentices employed by UK's largest employer of construction apprentices and delivered by CTS has now been confirmed as 1,148.

Shadow education secretary Angela Rayner said the majority of apprentices who have been placed elsewhere would feel "huge relief", but this "should not be allowed to distract from the repeated failings of the DfE to take the steps necessary to protect apprentices".

"It has been the CITB that has been supporting these learners in the wake of Carillion's collapse, while the government have simply buried their heads in the sand," she added.

In an answer to a parliamentary question last month, skills minister Anne Milton revealed that just two of the 1,200 apprentices cut adrift by the collapse of Carillion were offered a placement by the government – and both joined the army.

Stephanie Peacock, Labour MP for Barnsley East, said the government "had a duty" to look after the apprentices who have been "badly failed by corporate bosses and Tory ministers alike".

"They haven't even found so much as one apprenticeship in a single government department or agency," she continued.

The Department for Education had said it would continue paying the out-of-work apprentices beyond the end of March. However, it declined to comment on when these payments would end.

"We have been working closely with the CITB to find alternative employment for all those apprentices," a spokesperson said.

NEWS

Catholic SFCs demand protections before academisation window closes

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

Frustration is reaching boiling point at Catholic sixth-form colleges over barriers to converting to academy status.

Becoming an academy, and in doing so enjoying the luxury of not paying VAT, has been an option for nearly all SFCs since former chancellor George Osborne changed the rules in November 2015.

However, a group of 14 which are Catholic-run claim they are prevented from doing so due to their religious character, which would not be maintained under current government rules.

If they converted, they would lose protections in areas of curriculum, acts of worship and governance.

A short clause in the education bill could "easily rectify this", according to the Catholic Education Service and the Sixth-Form Colleges Association, which have been in joint talks with the Department for Education.

But 28 months after the option of academisation became available, no action has been taken.

The deadline to apply for funds from the government's £726 million post-area review restructuring facility – which 31 SFCs have so far used to cover the costs of converting to academy status – ends in just five months' time.

Peter McGee, the principal of St John Rigby SFC, who chairs the Association of Catholic SFCs, has begged the DfE to "hurry up" before that window closes.

"Other non-faith based colleges have been able to access the restructuring fund and there are a number that have converted but we've not even been able to start the process," he told FE Week.

"We've raised this a number of times with ministers who are well aware there are legislative changes needed but we have not had any movement or opportunity to progress."

He described the situation as "frustrating", particularly for Catholic SFCs which had planned to academise two years ago following recommendations in their area reviews.

Becoming an academy means SFCs no longer have to pay VAT – letting them off an average annual bill of £385,000.

The first to convert was Hereford SFC in March last year. Seventeen have since followed suit, leaving 65 designated SFCs. Thirteen of these are however in the pipeline of converting.

Mr McGee explained that VAT is not the main reason that Catholic SFCs want to convert: they want to "align themselves more closely with schools to work collaboratively".


Peter McGee

One Catholic SFC – Loreto in Manchester – is already an academy sponsor but cannot participate in the academy programme itself. Mr McGee, who will become an executive principal at Loreto from September, said the situation was a "peculiar anomaly".

Under current rules, if a Catholic SFC decides to become an academy it will remain as an FE institution but won't be governed by the statutory provisions in the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, which contains protections for religious character.

The CES has been "working closely" with the DfE to reinstate the legislative protections for the colleges as 16-to-19 academies in the next education bill, but the DfE is yet to commit.

James Kewin, deputy chief executive of the SFCA, insisted there is a "pressing need" to make progress, especially as the restructuring fund approaches its end.

"With no education bill likely in the foreseeable future, we are keen to explore non-legislative solutions to breaking this impasse," he told FE Week.

The Department for Education "remains committed to exploring" ways in which existing Catholic SFCs can convert to become academies while retaining their religious character.

"We will continue to work with the colleges and Catholic Education Service in developing these options and in supporting them to ensure the future success of the colleges," a spokesperson said.

£300m approved for 'significant' restructuring applications

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

The government has approved more than £300 million to cover the cost of implementing post-area review changes, even though the skills minister has insisted it is not for "propping up failing colleges".

The figure, which amounts to around 40 per cent of the £726 million on offer, was revealed in the latest Education and Skills Funding Agency progress report on the restructuring facility.

According to the announcement, 29 colleges have applied for restructuring support. A further 29 applications have come from 31 sixth-form colleges which want to cover the costs of converting to academy status.

Nineteen applications that include "funding to support restructuring" have been approved so far.

The report confirmed what skills minister Anne Milton has said in her latest exclusive column for FE Week (see page 12).

"To date we have approved over £300 million of restructuring facility funding and spent over £150 million, supporting 19 significant applications, as well as providing compensatory VAT funding and transition grants for a wider group of colleges," she wrote.

The minister denied that the cash is being used as a bailout fund.

"This funding is not about propping up failing colleges," she claimed. "Funding from the restructuring facility is only available after a rigorous assessment to help implement changes which will result in sustainable, effective institutions."

Successful applicants must have "a clear plan" along with a "realistic schedule for making this happen".

The latest announcement doesn't give any details of which colleges have received the cash nor how much.

The Department for Education is "not yet publishing detailed information" about successful bids while the application window is still open.

"By putting the FE sector on a sustainable footing we are making sure that people can benefit from a wide range of choice and quality education, wherever they live and whatever stage of life they are at," Ms Milton explained.

"I look forward to sharing with you how the restructuring facility is helping to achieve this later this year."

A number of colleges in dire straits that have received multimillion-pound handouts from the fund.

These include Lambeth College, which was expecting a whopping £25 million to pay off its exceptional financial support and bank loans, according to its 2016/17 accounts.

And struggling Telford College of Arts and Technology received £21 million for its merger with New College Telford – a sum that came in the form of a grant, according to its accounts.

Cash-strapped Stoke on Trent College was also reported to be submitting a £21.9 million bid to the facility to cover its debts, even though it has no plans to merge.

The restructuring facility, first announced in March 2016, is part of a package of support for colleges to help them implement recommendations arising from the area reviews, or other structural changes such as a merger brokered by the FE commissioner.

The cash, usually available as a loan, comes from a pot amounting to £726 million.

The deadline for applications was originally six months after a college's final area review meeting.

But in November last year, two months after the last deadline passed for colleges in the final wave of reviews, this was extended until September 2018 – with the funding available until March 2019.

The DfE denied that this meant the fund had failed, even though just 10 colleges had been allocated a combined total of £120 million to date.

NEWS

Former adviser to two skills ministers blasts apprenticeships levy

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

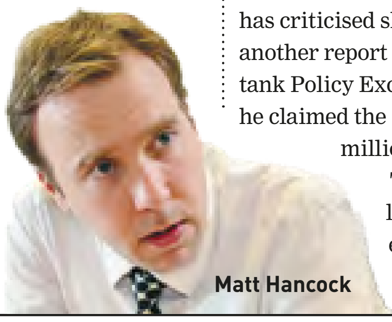
Yet another senior figure in FE has said the levy is in urgent need of reform, in a new report full of stinging criticism of the recent apprenticeship reforms.

A former senior advisor to two previous skills ministers, Nick Boles and Matt Hancock, Tom Richmond, who left the Department for Education in 2015, has criticised the impact of what he says is "in effect" a new tax on employers.

"This report has been able to take a considered look at the impact of the levy, and it's clear that major reform is needed as a priority," he told FE Week.

"It's actually putting many employers off of investing in apprenticeships.

"At present, the levy is too complicated for employers, focused on too many inappropriate forms of training and as a result is unlikely to deliver value-for-money."



Matt Hancock

Mr Richmond stressed that he did not help Mr Boles, who secured HMRC approval for the levy, with shaping the policy before it launched last April.

Among other things, in a report entitled 'The great training robbery: Assessing the first year of the apprenticeship levy' on behalf of the think-tank Reform, he suggests the government's target of three million starts by 2020 be scrapped, to avoid what he suggests is wasting £600 million a year on substandard training.

"Without reform, in 2019-20 the government will spend £600 million on courses incorrectly labelled as apprenticeships," he wrote.

This is not the first time Mr Richmond has criticised skills policy. He co-authored another report for the right-wing think-tank Policy Exchange in 2016, in which he claimed the starts target wasted £500 million a year.

The apprenticeship levy is currently paid by employers with an annual payroll of £3 million or more, and is set at 0.5 per cent of this cost.

Nick Boles

Eligible employers pay their levy contributions into a digital account held by HMRC, and can then spend their contributions on apprenticeship training delivered by registered providers.

Smaller employers can also access the funds generated through the levy, although they must pay 10 per cent towards the cost of the training.

The report recommends that this co-investment requirement for non-levy payers "should be removed with immediate effect" to avoid smaller employers disengaging from apprenticeships.

It adds that exam regulator Ofqual should be made the only option for quality-assuring end-point assessments to "ensure that standards are maintained over time and poor practice is quickly identified and eradicated".

The most popular option for EQA is the Institute for Apprenticeships (see page nine), though the Quality Assurance Agency, which generally deals with higher education qualifications, and professional bodies or employer-led approaches are other alternatives.

"This needs to change," Mr Richmond told FE Week. "The IfA has not got the expertise or capacity to run EQA. The system is too complicated. This lack of oversight wouldn't be acceptable for GCSEs or A-levels, which is why Ofqual needs to formally be put in charge of quality assurance and regulation."

Mr Richmond's report warns that the launch of the levy, which actually happened under a skill minister he didn't work for, Robert Halfon, had "diminished the quality of apprenticeships".

Tom Richmond

"The list of roles now officially counted as an 'apprenticeship' includes many low-skill and often very short training courses, all of which can now be delivered using the funds generated by the levy," he wrote.

Employers are "using the levy to rebadge existing training courses as apprenticeships to shift the costs of training onto the government instead".

Many employers are investing levy money in management apprenticeships that upskills existing employees and therefore "prioritise older and more experienced workers instead of improving the recruitment and training of young people in skilled occupations".

Ofsted saves £400k with longer grade two re-inspection gap

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

Ofsted will save around £400,000 during the next academic year by elongating the maximum period between inspections for 'good' providers from three to five years, it has told FE Week.

This change in inspection policy was revealed in the April edition of the learning and skills inspection handbook.

"We estimate that this could potentially save around £400,000 in 2018/19," said a spokesperson.

"We will inspect all 'good colleges' and skills providers within five years; that's not to say we will inspect providers every five years, or indeed in the fifth year.

"As now, we will take into account risk information in deciding the timing."

The watchdog has reviewed its inspection frequencies to "ensure we are using our resources effectively and efficiently so that inspection is intelligent, responsible and focused", he added.

The inspectorate is having to look at where it can make savings and stretch already limited resources, as provider numbers increase.

A major source of additional pressure has been the proliferation of government-approved apprenticeship providers.

Chief inspector Amanda Spielman admitted to MPs on the Public Accounts Committee in January that she was trying to secure extra public funding because of this.

The House of Commons education select committee also heard in the same month from Joe Dromey, a senior research fellow for the policy think-tank IPPR, that apprenticeship numbers and Ofsted funding are "going in opposite directions".

The total number of providers on the register of apprenticeship training providers increased to 2,588 last month. This was after a further 13 organisations were unexpectedly added, five months on from when the third and most recent window of opportunity to get onto RoATP closed.

The Ofsted inspection handbook explains how the extended gap between inspections will work in practice.

"Providers judged good for overall effectiveness at their most recent inspection will usually be inspected within five years of their last inspection," it states.

"This will normally be a short inspection, but may be a full inspection where information suggests that this is the most appropriate course of action, for example if the provider's performance has declined."

Ofsted introduced short inspections for FE providers that were judged 'good' at their last inspection in September 2015. It claimed these two-day visits would allow for more frequent and effective monitoring than traditional five-day full scale inspections.

But they were viewed by some as a cost-cutting measure, and have attracted criticism for their limited scope and predictable outcome.

Short inspection reports almost always return a 'good' verdict, though they can be extended to a full inspection if serious problems are found and a lower grade is deemed appropriate.

Former Ofsted inspector Phil Hatton, who now works as an FE consultant, accepted that lengthening the maximum period between inspections for 'good' providers would save precious resources.

But he claimed it "really will lessen the grip on ensuring quality, as many will have had short inspections and then a possible five year gap". Ofsted has denied this.

INVESTIGATES

£73m AEB left unspent by 441 providers

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

EXCLUSIVE FROM FRONT

Hundreds of colleges and training providers have between them failed to deliver £73 million of allocated funding, exclusive FE Week analysis has revealed.

Education and Skills Funding Agency figures show that 441 providers delivered less provision over 2016/17 than the money they were allocated from the adult education budget would have allowed.

This will be a source of major frustration for huge swathes of the sector, especially considering the heavy criticism directed recently at the government for wider underfunding of FE.

Julian Gravatt, the deputy chief executive of the Association of Colleges, claimed the fault lies with "restrictive" rules and low funding rates, rather than providers.

And an email sent last month by the ESFA to one provider that underspent, seen by FE Week, states that officials are reviewing college budget forecasts and comparing them with delivery projections.

It goes on to offer "voluntary" ways to lessen the impact of funding claw-backs for under-delivery, such as reducing their current allocations either mid-year or in 2018/19.

Our analysis compared figures showing the ESFA's final 2016/17 funding year values with the most recent allocations from June 2017.

We found a whopping shortfall of £73,050,404 between what providers were allocated compared with what they actually delivered.

Of the 441 providers affected, 11 underspent by more than £1,000,000.

This was on top of the £5,059,522 that was paid to 86 colleges and local authority providers for courses that didn't take place, thanks to a three-per-cent tolerance rule on grant-funded AEB under-delivery.

With the exception of independent training providers, FE institutions receive their AEB funding through a grant, which means they have to repay any cash they've been overpaid.

The ESFA no longer automatically reduces AEB allocations year-on-year where providers have under-delivered, which can mean some get allocations that are larger than the level of provision they expect to deliver.

To compound matters, the introduction of FE loans for learners aged 19 to 23 in 2016/17 meant that courses that used to be funded through the AEB were no longer included.

Mr Gravatt insisted restrictions are too tight on what can and can't be funded through the AEB, and urged the government to "introduce more flexibility into the rules, because there are millions of adults who could benefit from adult education and retraining".

A spokesperson for the University of the Arts, London said that "like many providers" it was affected "by changes in government funding arrangements, from funded adult learning to FE loans for 19+ students".

UAL was one of the worst culprits, delivering just £83,605-worth of adult education, from an allocation of £1.5 million. Despite this shortfall, its allocation is unchanged for 2017/18.

Capita had the largest shortfall of any provider, with actual delivery almost £2.5 million lower than its £4 million allocation.

A spokesperson said this was due to "a change in customer demand" over the year.

Lambeth College under-delivered by £1.5 million on its £11 million allocation, which Monica Box, the college's principal, claimed was because it had moved out of one of its campuses at the beginning of that year.

It had been unable to find space for the courses that had been delivered on the closed campus and "this situation had a significant impact on our ability to meet our AEB funding target for 16/17".

Both Lewisham Southwark College and Telford College had shortfalls of more than £1.5 million, but were unavailable for comment.

Earlier this year Anne Milton admitted that the "mainstream participation element" of the AEB had been underspent by £63 million over the year.

The revelation prompted Mark Dawe, the boss of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, to demand that any unspent cash be reallocated to other providers.

A change in procurement rules meant that private providers were forced to tender for a slice of just £110 million in AEB funding in 2017/18, while their competitors – most notably colleges and local authorities – did not.

Mr Dawe now wants the government to oblige every provider to have to bid for its share of adult education funding.

Providers with AEB shortfall greater than £1m	2016/2017 AEB allocation at June 2017	2016/2017 AEB funded	Shortfall	
Capita PLC	£4,038,071	£1,611,775	-£2,426,296	-60%
Telford College	£7,028,489	£5,282,023	-£1,746,466	-25%
Lambeth College	£11,029,151	£9,485,566	-£1,543,585	-14%
Lewisham Southwark College	£12,066,583	£10,544,284	-£1,522,299	-13%
University of the arts, London	£1,509,691	£83,605	-£1,426,086	-94%
LTE Group (including Manchester College)	£17,942,200	£16,539,012	-£1,403,188	-8%
City of Liverpool College	£9,619,094	£8,228,665	-£1,390,429	-14%
South and City College Birmingham	£21,621,513	£20,307,891	-£1,313,622	-6%
Leicester College	£11,341,332	£10,043,756	-£1,297,576	-11%
City of Bristol College	£7,886,525	£6,597,905	-£1,288,620	-16%
Learndirect Limited	£60,199,994	£59,173,821	-£1,026,173	-2%

The 86 FE colleges and local authorities allowed to keep £5m

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

Eighty-six colleges and local authorities were allowed to keep more than £5 million in adult education budget funding for courses that didn't take place in 2016/17.

The £5,059,522 windfall was the result of a funding rule in which a three-per-cent tolerance is applied to grant-funded AEB under-delivery.

Twelve colleges and one LA provider each received more than £100,000 for provision they didn't deliver over the year as a result of this rule, according to the ESFA's 2016/17 final funding year values, published on Wednesday.

The largest payment went to Birmingham Metropolitan College, which delivered adult education worth £13,798,372 against an allocation of £14,189,878 – meaning it was overpaid by £391,506.

The rule states that "where your delivery of the overall AEB is at least 97 per cent of your funding allocation, we will not make a year-end adjustment to your funding allocation and you will not have to pay back any unspent funds", according to the ESFA's 2016/17 AEB funding and performance management rules.

However, it doesn't apply to independent training providers, which will be subject to a "year-end adjustment" to their funding allocations for any under-delivery and "must pay back any unspent funds".

The AoC's Julian Gravatt said the existence of the tolerance "recognises the fact that the system itself is quite complicated because every learning aim taken by a student is separately priced".

At the opposite end of the spectrum, 74 providers over-delivered provision that was not paid for, worth a combined total of £2.6 million.

However, this is set to change: the ESFA recently announced it was "committing to fund three-per-cent over-delivery at the end of the 2018 to 2019 funding year for all providers" to "ensure providers can deliver adult education budget provision with confidence".

The funding and performance management rules for 2018/19 have yet to be published, so it's not yet known if the three-per-cent tolerance for under-delivery will remain after 2017/18

Providers with 2016/17 AEB shortfall of £100,000 not clawed back	AEB delivered	AEB funded	Shortfall not clawed back	
Birmingham Metropolitan College	£13,798,372	£14,189,878	£391,506	-3%
College Of Haringey, Enfield And North-East London	£12,398,027	£12,717,562	£319,535	-3%
The Wkcic Group	£18,162,925	£18,475,247	£312,322	-2%
New City College	£12,111,946	£12,411,095	£299,149	-2%
South Thames College	£10,016,763	£10,276,924	£260,161	-3%
Westminster City Council	£6,942,494	£7,147,927	£205,433	-3%
City Of Wolverhampton College	£5,723,949	£5,900,200	£176,251	-3%
Stoke On Trent College	£5,681,001	£5,846,395	£165,394	-3%
Bradford College	£8,814,301	£8,941,827	£127,526	-1%
West Nottinghamshire College	£6,861,203	£6,980,652	£119,449	-2%
South Gloucestershire and Stroud College	£3,755,957	£3,870,328	£114,371	-3%
Harlow College	£4,125,177	£4,232,184	£107,007	-3%
Wigan And Leigh College	£3,768,637	£3,874,531	£105,894	-3%

EDITORIAL

All this unspent funding is absurd

The adult education budget has been significantly cut over the last decade, to the annual £1.5 billion it is today.

And, we are told, as a result there are colleges in financial turmoil, training providers losing out in ESFA tenders, and ESOL courses with waiting lists in the thousands.

Yet this week we reveal that 441 providers have failed to use tens of millions of allocated AEB funding.

Many are colleges and the AoC was quick to blame "restrictive" funding rules and low rates.

As a former college curriculum planner myself, I'd argue that pointing the finger at the funding system is too simplistic.

In truth, it is often poor planning, over-optimistic targets and a preference to under-deliver rather than go unpaid for the costs of over-delivery that's to blame.

In response the ESFA appears to be taking two sensible steps.

Firstly, encouraging colleges to reduce unrealistic allocations, presumably with a view to reallocating the funding in-year to those able to use it.

And secondly, introducing a policy that commits to fund three per cent of any AEB over-delivery in 2018/2019.

It's a complex issue – but surely the absurdity of leaving scarce FE funding unspent can't be allowed to continue?

Nick Linford, Editor
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Judge: Learndirect got 'nowhere near' beating Ofsted in court

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

The country's largest FE provider didn't get "anywhere near" quashing its now infamous 'inadequate' rating during its legal fight with Ofsted, the judge who presided over the case has admitted.

After a seven-month wait the Manchester Administrative Court has finally published the detailed judgement following Learndirect's failed judicial review in early August last year.

Mr Justice King's damning verdict exposes just how far away the provider was from beating the inspectorate – as the challenge was backed up with little evidence and a weak argument in court.

One of its contentions was that Ofsted's lead inspectors, Paul Cocker and Charles Searle, had a "predetermined" negative view of its apprenticeship provision which was "procedurally unfair".

However, the judge ruled that there was "no evidence of that whatsoever".

"One of the problems with the claimant's submissions is its reliance on the written evidence of Mr Palmer and Ms Wood [Learndirect's bosses] to support many of the propositions put forward, but the court has to set against this, the written evidence of Mr Cocker and indeed Mr Searle," he wrote.

"There has been no application to cross-examine the defendant's witnesses. In these circumstances, where there is a conflict between the respective evidence on matters of fact, as I have already explained, the court is bound to accept that of the defendant's witnesses, in this case that of Mr Cocker."

The provider also claimed that Ofsted's sample size of apprentices was not large enough to reflect the size of the company, and that the watchdog should have gone back in to the provider to do more inspecting.

Mr Justice King said that although no "expert evidence" was called on behalf of the claimant to "counter the evidence of the expert regulator", Learndirect had submitted figures which it had claimed "speak for themselves".

For example, it suggested that there had been only one scrutiny of a single apprentice at intermediate level in relation to some nearly 5,000 apprenticeships on health and social care.

"This was the equivalent, he suggested, of plucking just one child out of a school class for a year to determine overall educational progress in a given school," the judge explained.

He said that the "simplicity" of this argument was "attractive" – but he could not accept it.

"In my judgment, none of these matters, not even the complaint as to sample size, go anywhere near to enabling this court to say that no rational decision-maker could have made the decision it did on the evidence before it," he recalled.

He criticised Learndirect for claiming its sample-size figures spoke for themselves, and concluded that its claims "must fail" based on the material presented before him.

"It is impossible for me to conclude on the material before me that no reasonable regulatory body would or could have been satisfied with the information before the defendant's inspectors in this instance by the time of the writing of the report into the claimant activities," he continued.

"For all these reasons this claim must fail. The claim is dismissed."

Learndirect's battle against Ofsted has engrossed the sector ever since FE Week brought attention to it in August after our lawyers successfully contested strict reporting restrictions.

The subsequent fallout forced the government to single it out for special treatment by allowing it to see through the end of their current contracts – instead of ending them within the usual three-month termination period.

It was then subject to investigations from the National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee.

The PAC held its hearing on the saga in January, in which the NAO's comptroller and auditor general, Sir Amyas Morse, told Learndirect's boss Andy Palmer that the judicial review could be seen as a "hardnosed use of lawyers and quite hostile tactics to delay something for the purpose of improving your cashflow".

"I do not approve of it," he added. "In fact I strongly disapprove of it."

Learndirect and Ofsted both declined to comment.

COMMENTS

Institute for Apprenticeships boss blasts AELP for 'inflammatory' end-point assessment concerns

What a worrying state of affairs. I'm sure the job description for the IFA's CEO requires the ability to win friends and influence people – not make enemies and alienate them. We've got enough problems without being caricatured as profiteers who ask too many inconvenient questions. Perhaps Sir Gerry could get together with AELP and sort out these issues in a more respectful and considered manner?

Matt Garvey

Can you imagine a scenario like this with GCSE exams pending? The governing body saying to parents "don't worry, you don't need an awarding body set up, the fact that we've had no content guidance or syllabus to prepare the students is fine! You're just being inflammatory and making a big deal of this!"

Sam Ingram

Minister sets out success measures for FE commissioner

That seems like an impossible position the FE commissioner has been placed in. The commissioner's success is based on providers not messing up. Providers not messing up is largely based on the availability of both adequate funding and good staff. I expect there will all of a sudden be a radical reduction in the number of providers having an intervention. Ludicrous.

Dean Carey

Government 'must act now' to replace European funding

Has to go hand in hand with a review of formula funding, subcontracting and the ILR. If it's true that it will be less bureaucratic then there are plenty of layers there.

But, the flip side is that bureaucracy is good for keeping employment figures high (even if not good for productivity). So the transition in lots of sectors, not just FE, is a political hot potato.

On the bright side, "change" is the only consistent thing in this sector, so we should be well prepared!

JW

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One of England's Top Performing Colleges

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Our Principal for over 25 years will be retiring at the end of August 2018 and we are seeking to appoint a new Principal to inspire and motivate our vibrant organisation to remain at the forefront of FE and skills, taking us through the next phase of our journey to "outstanding".

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You may be a current Principal, or an experienced Deputy or Vice Principal ready to make your mark at the next level. You will have a proven high record of achievement with a curriculum, skills or resources background and possess strong business and financial acumen.

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The successful appointee will possess a clear understanding of the FE landscape, be able to demonstrate knowledge of the key national education and skills policies, priorities and agendas in order to lead Selby College through the next evolution of the sector, successfully navigating many challenges.

Closing date for applications is Monday 30th April at 12:30pm and the assessment centre will be held 21st & 22nd May.

To apply for this role or to download an application pack visit: **www.protocol.co.uk/selby-college**

For a confidential discussion about the role contact Ian Sackree **07795 271559** or David Beynon **07970 042334**

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Closing date for receipt of applications:
Monday 16 April at noon

Assistant Principal Stockport and Stretford Campuses

Assistant Principal Altrincham Campus

Competitive Salary

We are looking for two talented senior leaders to lead the curriculum at Stockport and Stretford campuses, and at Altrincham campus. The ideal candidates will be highly effective leaders who are looking for their next challenge. These roles will be accountable for delivering transformational change within the TCG's vision and Corporate Plan. You will:

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Competitive Salary

You will lead on 16 -19 Study Programmes at Trafford College Group, ensuring that English and mathematic delivery, Additional Learner Support and Pastoral Support functions provide an high quality experience for Trafford College Group students. You will have the vision to develop a leading Study Programme model that provides high outcomes for students. You will:

- Deliver 16-10 Study Programme objectives
- Drive recruitment to 16-19 Study Programmes
- Drive continuous improvement in 16-19 performance measures
- Ensure the College meets all safeguarding, student support and careers advice and guidance
- Driving student attainment in English and mathematics

COVENTRY COLLEGE

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Assistant Principal, Business Growth

Salary: Circa £67k, plus performance related pay and generous benefits package, including 35 days' annual leave, pension scheme, onsite car park, gym and nursery

Coventry is positively buzzing: with a population 7% younger than the national average (and increasing faster than anywhere else in the West Midlands), at the heart of one of the fastest growing LEP areas in terms of economic output, coupled with the opportunities arising from the accolade of becoming City of Culture in 2021, Coventry is a vibrant place to be!

With global economic strengths in areas such as Automotive R&D (particularly Electric Vehicles and Connected & Autonomous Vehicles), Advanced Manufacturing, and Digital Creative (especially in gaming), coupled with a strong SME base, Coventry is a city of innovation that has constantly re-invented itself to survive and thrive.

At the heart of this landscape, the newly formed Coventry College has ambitious plans for growth. Created from the merger in 2017 of Henley College and City College, Coventry College is now the key professional and technical skills provider in the area and is making great strides in its first year, performing well across all areas of its delivery plan. Building upon existing relationships with over 700 employers, this is an exciting opportunity to shape skills delivery across Coventry and the wider region, harnessing the demand for more, higher and new skills in the workforce in order to take advantage of the economic opportunities now presenting themselves. Leading stakeholder relationships, working with employers to develop sector-specific strategies, you will be at the heart of shaping the College's future as the 'go-to' strategic growth partner.

You'll need to be passionate, have strong change leadership skills, with a drive and determination to succeed. An experienced skills strategist and business developer, you'll be comfortable in shaping plans which deliver organisational growth and exceed customer expectations. Assessing and stimulating market demand across all income streams – including student-led programmes, employer skills, apprenticeships, commercial and international business – you will have a proven ability to create innovative, client-focused solutions, whilst also being adept at spotting opportunities and introducing new products to the College portfolio.

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To apply, log on to **www.coventrycollege.ac.uk** (look under the 'about us' section) or **www.fejobs.com** (search for Coventry College, Henley Campus)

Applications Close: Monday, 23rd April 2018

We are actively committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and any vulnerable groups within the College community. We value our diverse College community and are actively committed to promoting equality and diversity in all areas of College life. Applications are welcomed from all sections of the community. We expect all our staff and volunteers to share these commitments. The successful applicant will be required to complete an enhanced DBS check.

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Based in Stoke on Trent with transport links to the North West, West Midlands and East Midlands, Stoke on Trent College is the largest provider of further education in Stoke and North Staffordshire, with around 10,000 students each year on full-time and part-time study programmes, apprenticeships, professional qualifications and university-level courses. We help thousands of local people each year to gain the basic skills needed for work, be it English and maths, employability skills or specific work-related qualifications.

Our staff put teaching, learning and assessment at the heart of everything they do, with a commitment to excellence and continuous improvement we respect and value all individuals and behave with honesty and integrity. We have a united staff culture where we seek and share best practice helping us to support and prioritise learners.

In recognition of the vital role our staff play in our ongoing success we offer fantastic rewards beyond your pay slip that include a competitive pension package, enhanced leave policies, support for continued professional development, health related benefits including individual health care plans and access to a state of the art gym, childcare vouchers, onsite nursery, free parking, restaurant facilities and a cycle to work scheme to name but a few!

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Education Business Services (Stoke) Ltd is an equal opportunities employer and positively encourages applications from all sections of the community.

Education Business Services (Stoke) Ltd is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. We expect all staff to share this commitment.

Stoke on Trent College has two exciting opportunities within our Funding and Information Services team.

Head of Business Intelligence and Systems

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Head of MIS

We are also in search of an experienced Management Information Services and Examinations professional to join their team. With previous experience in a College environment and an expert understanding of the funding methodologies for all funding streams, EFSA funding audit and recent experience of examinations and JCQ requirements, the post holder will lead the MIS & Examinations team to ensure efficiency of systems, accurate learner records, readily available KPI's to monitor performance, curriculum planning support, a JCQ compliant examinations system and that all data and information are captured, retained and processed securely in accordance with the expectations of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

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PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE OFFICER
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As the Performance and Finance Officer for the Adult Learning and Employment Service you will join a small team and have responsibility for providing data, performance information and finance functions to the team. It includes undertaking the Individual Learner Record returns to the funding body, ensuring maximisation of funding for the Service. You will work closely with the Adult Learning and Employment Manager to ensure that performance information is available regularly and to meet the needs of the senior leadership team as requirements arise.

The successful candidate will hold a degree, significant relevant work experience and be able to demonstrate previous success in data management in an adult or further education setting. Experience of the educational database LearnerTrack would be an advantage.

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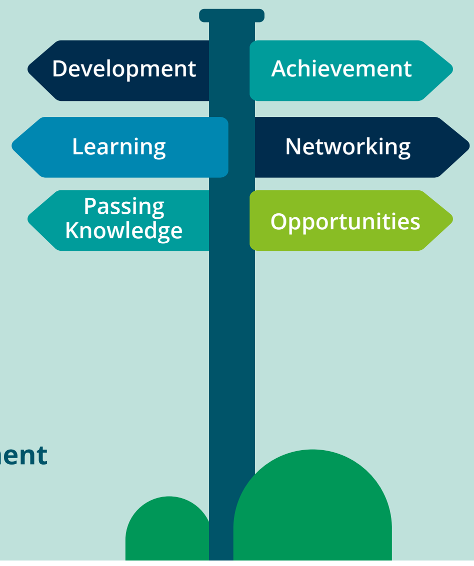

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EXPERTS

MINISTERIAL MUSINGS

Anne Milton,
Minister for skills and apprenticeships

The restructuring facility won't be used to prop up bad colleges

The government has put more than £700 million up to keep struggling colleges on their feet, but it's not a hand-out for failures, writes Anne Milton

FE Week readers will know that a strong further education sector can change the lives of both young and older people. I want to do what I can to make the sector more resilient, which means helping providers prepare for future changes and rise to the new challenges ahead.

We need colleges to be financially secure and able to reinvest in learning and improving quality. The structural changes that have followed area reviews are the foundation for improvement – through greater efficiency and stronger leadership. The expanded remit for the FE commissioner, the introduction of the Strategic College Improvement Fund and National Leaders of Further Education will now bring a broader focus and greater support to raising standards – working with some of the most outstanding current college leaders.

> "Where colleges have needed to make major changes we have been providing extra funds

The area review programme, and the structural changes that followed are proving to have a big impact. Our programme has identified places where FE providers would benefit from long-term structural change – and thanks to the hard work of colleges and local partners during reviews, many recommendations have already been implemented, including 42 mergers to date.

Throughout this process our priority has been making sure colleges have good leadership, manage their finances well, and are on a firm financial footing for the future. This is essential if we want to deliver high quality FE provision for all.

I know that any change can be challenging and where colleges have needed to make major changes as the result of a review, which they cannot fund themselves, we have been providing extra funds. What's important is that young and older people are able to get the high-quality provision they need to get on. The restructuring facility is there to help colleges become financially sustainable, often through a process of structural change. To date we have approved over £300 million of funding and spent over £150 million, supporting 19 significant applications, as well as providing compensatory VAT funding and transition grants for other colleges.

The facility has made the merger between South Cheshire College and West Cheshire College possible. WCC had experienced serious financial issues, having required exceptional financial support from the government for day-to-day spending and quality issues, not to mention a previous Ofsted rating of 'inadequate'. The merger in March 2017 meant the combined 13,000 learners are now under one leadership team which has been recently judged 'good'. This merger is providing a solid foundation for sustainable provision across this region.

This funding is not about propping up failing colleges. Funding from the restructuring facility is only available after a rigorous assessment to help implement changes which will result in sustainable, effective institutions. Successful applicants have to show that they have developed a clear plan, with a realistic schedule for making this happen. This must include financial plans for the next three years, with realistic forecasts for student numbers and planned income, a clear curriculum plan which meets the needs of local employers and students, a staffing plan which reflects actual need, and a strategy for making best use of their buildings and facilities.

The window for applications remains open until September 28, and so we are not yet publishing detailed information about the previous allocations. By putting the FE sector on a sustainable footing we are making sure that people can benefit from a wide range of choice and quality education, wherever they live and whatever stage of life they are at. I look forward to sharing with you how the restructuring facility is helping to achieve this later this year.

We want to provide the right framework and targeted support to help colleges become resilient, well governed and high-quality providers. We are looking at the resilience and sustainability of the FE sector at the moment because we do understand the challenges colleges face. I want to make sure that we do all we can to help them thrive and succeed.

PROFESSOR EWART KEEP

Director of SKOPE, Oxford University

Market versus system – say hello, wave goodbye

Further education is increasingly being used as a laboratory between competing models of education, and the market model is winning. Ewart Keep explains why marketising education might not be such a safe bet

Although many in FE still instinctively talk about the "system", in reality there are now only markets for different segments of provision – 14-to-16, 16-to-18/19, AEB, loans-funded post-19, and apprenticeships. This change from a system-based model to a market model happened quite gradually, from limited contestability under New Labour to full-blown marketisation under the current government.

It also occurred with little public debate on the relative merits of this fundamental choice about how best to configure funding and provision. In part, this lack of debate helps explain why people still refer to a system. In FE there has been no decisive, overt break. The new marketised reality has simply crept up on the sector, and providers have adjusted accordingly.

Why have markets and contestability in education become so popular in England? Scotland and Wales have retained a systems approach. The answer is a set of interrelated economic theories. Their starting point is the "principal/agent dilemma". This suggests that where a government (the principal) funds institutions (the agent) to deliver public policy, there is a danger that the latter will instead follow their own self-interest, ignore what the former wants, and deliver what is easiest, perhaps inefficiently.

The solution, according to the textbook, is to route funding through the customer – in FE's case students and employers – so that competition will force the agent/provider to deliver that which is needed. The market and customer choices are seen as the most effective resource allocation mechanism. At the same time, contests between providers for resources (funding and students) will drive up efficiency, with the weakest going out of business.

There are at least four problems with this analysis. First, the evidence that this model works in the real world is, at best, limited. Few developed countries have gone down this route. Australia is the prime example, and it has resulted in a decline in vocational provision and multiple funding frauds.

Second, there has been little discussion about some of the downsides to marketisation here. For example, the need to maintain spare capacity to facilitate student choice. As UTCs and studio schools are demonstrating, the 14-to-18 marketplace is a crowded and demanding one. There are also major issues about financial instability, the costs – not least to learners – of institutional failure, and providers' inability to plan long-term to support developments like the T-levels.

> "The evidence that this model works in the real world is, at best, limited

Third, so far limited thought has been given to the longer-term implications. To pick just one example, where is market regulation and governance heading? At present, the market is regulated by a range of different agencies and bodies – for example, the FE commissioner, the Institute for Apprenticeships, the Education and Skills Funding Agency, Ofsted and Ofqual. The boundaries between their respective remits are often blurry, and the overall regulatory system in FE is far more diffuse than for universities. At the same time, if the customer is king and market forces rule, what need is there for traditional governance mechanisms? Why have boards of governors when customer demand dictates strategy and defines success?

Fourth, FE policy is fundamentally incoherent. Overlaying official enthusiasm for markets there is a strand of thinking that still yearns for traditional elements of skills forecasting and planning. An example here are the new skills advisory panels. Policy also hankers after greater cooperation and a systems-based approach for some forms of provision (see the DfE's social mobility plan for example). How the tensions between markets and planning and partnership will be resolved is as yet profoundly unclear.

To try to throw light on the meaning and implications of marketisation, Oxford University, working in partnership with the Association of Colleges, is undertaking a project on the issue for the FE Trust for Leadership. Our main objective is to produce a set of scenarios for how marketisation could develop, and to explore some of the main challenges, tensions and contradictions with a markets-based policy. Keep an eye on the FETL and AoC websites for details.

EXPERTS

JO MAHER

Principal and CEO, Boston College

Own goal: Why is there no T-level pathway for sport?

Elite sports is one of the hardest industries to break into, yet there are no plans for any technical routes, laments Jo Maher

The independent panel on technical education's report in 2016 identified "15 clear routes to skilled employment" where there is a "substantial requirement for technical knowledge and practical skills".

Sport was not one of them.

Sport is one of the most competitive industries there is, with worldwide audiences, major international events and billions of pounds in revenue generated annually. Sport is an industry so technical that at elite performance level you have to complete up to three years of training after completing a master's program to become accredited or chartered. Sport covers professional and technical jobs across biomechanics, physiology, psychology, performance analysis, coaching, and strength and conditioning.

Physical activity, exercise and leisure are industries in their own right but with a clear synergy to sport, requiring transferable knowledge and similar competencies. I fully endorse AoC Sport's stance that a 'Sport and physical activity' career pathway should be acknowledged within the occupational maps and the route amended to 'Health, science, sport and physical activity'.

The Institute for Apprenticeship states that the "maps are not an exhaustive overview of the labour market and will be regularly reviewed and updated". To be successful, it will be necessary to prove that sport is a skilled occupation, with a substantial requirement for technical education and training that cannot be learnt exclusively on the job. Is this the case?

To become a chartered professional is a mark of professional competency in a particular field of work. The British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES) runs an accreditation scheme, which leads to chartered scientist status and the scheme is widely recognised in elite sport as a standard for employment. Furthermore, the role of sport and exercise psychologist is now a protected title. There is no doubt that high levels of technical education and training are required to operate in elite sport.

So why is the T-level sport missing?

I have been told that sport must be academic as opposed to technical because students go to university. The logic is that A-levels instead of technical qualifications would place sport on the academic side of qualification reform. However, employers still require technical training, leaving master's graduates spending up to three years on technical training, at their own expense in many cases, in order to get a job.

> "Apprenticeships in sport are not widely available, resulting in low enrolment numbers

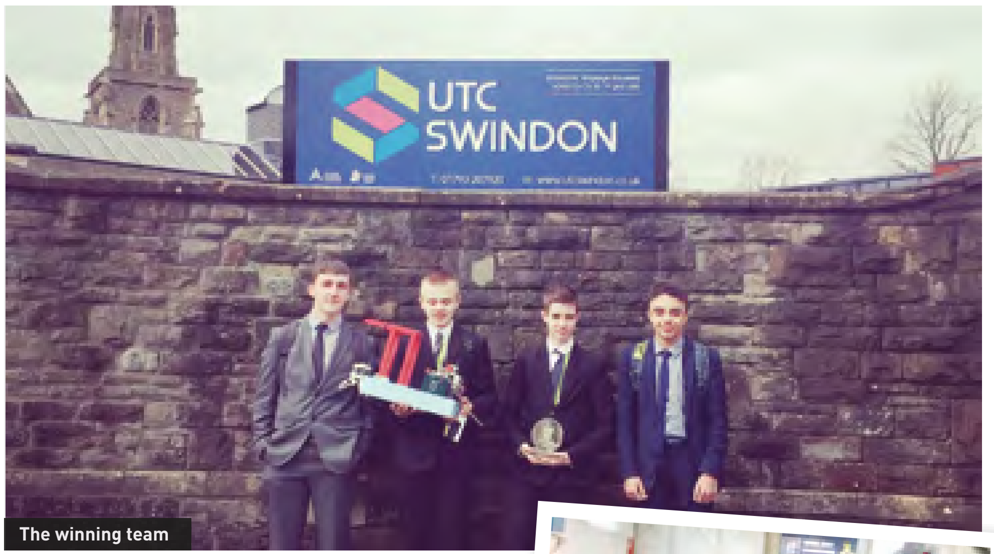
The attraction of working in elite sport is meanwhile so high that professional clubs can ask for higher-level qualifications than roles may require, for low salaries, and still be spoilt for choice. I have seen professional football clubs in England offering £12,000 salaries and requiring a minimum of a BSc and to be accredited, while many teams offer internships and voluntary roles.

This is where the problem lies. There has been an overreliance on motivated postgraduates continuing to develop their technical skills, as opposed to improving the system in order to map the technical training as part of their studies. Not because technical training is not needed or is needed only at postgraduate level. The result is that sport has not engaged as much as other sectors in the apprenticeship reforms.

The uptake of vocational qualifications at level three across the sector has been strong for a number of years. However, apprenticeships in sport are not widely available, resulting in low enrolment numbers when compared to other sectors. The advanced apprenticeship in sporting excellence is the exception, and it has long supported young athletes with the training required to succeed in elite sport, specific to the performance side.

I cannot think of another industry that demands up to nine years of training, at a minimum cost of £36,000, to employ a person on an average salary of £18,000. We must do better. Co-ordinating the technical training requirements across the sector and including sport in the occupational maps may trigger the shift needed. Developing T-levels, level three apprenticeships and higher apprenticeships for elite sport job roles, supported by key stakeholders such as BASES, would benefit students, employers and the taxpayer.

CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King*



The winning team

Shipshape and Bristol fashion

The teams in action

Five aspiring engineers from UTC Swindon took a top prize in the Royal Navy engineering challenge finals, a national STEM competition.

The team of year 10 students won the 14-to-16 age category, in which they had to design an unmanned, remotely operated system that would clear objects from the seabed.

The students had just one day to build, refine and test their invention, alongside preparing a presentation about their design and approach.

Their invention impressed judges the most out of the 75 teams competing at the finals in Portsmouth, as well as clearing the most objects from a replica sea bed set up in a 3 x 3.4m test tank.

"They showed immense technical skill, determination and ingenuity to win the challenge against tough competition. These are exactly the kind of qualities that we need in the engineers of the future and as a school we are hugely proud of them," said Jon Oliver, principal of the UTC.

Down to business: Students help the Newcastle Eagles on matchday

A social media slam-dunk

Business students have taken control of the social media accounts of a championship basketball club in a unique work experience placement.

The 15 level three students from Gateshead College teamed up with the Newcastle Eagles to develop their employability skills, taking responsibility for ticket sales, managing social media posts and increasing the number of club sign-ups ahead of a match.

Students were also in charge of organising photo opportunities with the club's mascot, Swoop, on the day of the game, as well as selling merchandise.

"It has been great to welcome students from Gateshead College to work with us. The students came along with innovative, unique ideas and a genuine enthusiasm to achieve the goals I set them," said Paul Blake, the team's managing director.

"Our students have taken so much away from this project. They've been able to get hands-on event and project management experience in a fast-paced environment with challenging targets and have really made the most of the opportunity," added Chris Toon, deputy principal at the college.

Suffolk learners get down to business

Swap shop: Aliona Cervinskaja and Joe Seaman

The winners of a competition to breathe new life into Suffolk charity shops have been revealed.

Aliona Cervinskaja and Joe Seaman won the week-long challenge, which saw teams of level three business and retail students from West Suffolk College take over six local charity shops, using their business, visual merchandising and social media skills to encourage more people to visit.

The pair took over the St Nicholas Hospice Care Shop in Bury St Edmunds, raising the most money in the store compared to their peers.

Other teams took over branches of EACH, Suffolk Age UK, Barnardo's, Cancer Research UK and the Salvation Army.

"We gave them the tools and the space to express their retail ideas and creativity, and they developed an attractive and eye catching Easter shop window display," said Bill Hill, shop manager at the St Nicholas Hospice Care Shop.

"Both were engaged with the day-to-day structure of life in a boutique charity shop, and were keen to acquire knowledge of the essential art of visual merchandising."

"Feedback from charity staff has been extremely positive, so we hope to build on links with these great charities in future projects," added Nina Hart, the college's business and retail course director.

Trans visibility campaign

Jess Ryan, third from left, and Ashleigh Lee, right, with students

Students at Barnsley College have learned about the transgender community during a guest talk from two trans women.

Ashleigh Lee and Jess Ryan travelled from Halifax to share their experiences of gender reassignment with the college's childcare and education students, as well as fielding questions from students about their lives, what being transgender means, and the issues they've faced along the way.

The talk was tied to the children's health and wellbeing unit which is studied on the course. In particular, the learning objectives of how to understand the needs of children during transition and significant events, and their potential effects of on a child's life.

They also helped a handful of learners who were confused about their own gender become more informed about the options available to them.

"Education is key in building people's understanding of the transgender community and hearing our stories gave the students valuable knowledge about the transgender community, who are often a misrepresented group," said Ms Lee.

"People can experience very different reactions from family members and friends and educating young people is vital in breaking down misconceptions," Ms Ryan added.

CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King*

FEATURED CAMPUS ROUND-UP

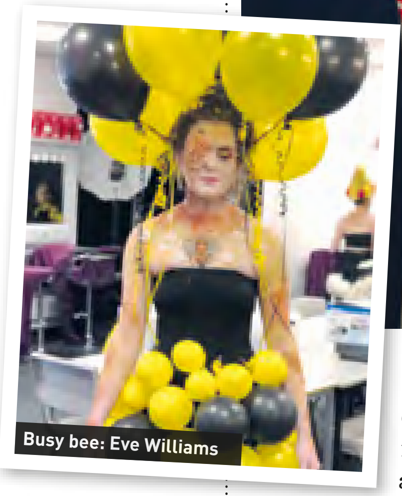
Hopwood Hall wins the battle of Manchester

Hopwood Hall College swept the board in a competition for further education colleges in Greater Manchester, reports Samantha King.

The annual Greater Manchester Skills Competition ran from March 19 to 23 and pitted 10 colleges against each other in disciplines including hair and beauty, hospitality and catering challenges, travel and tourism, carpentry, and sports.

In total, Hopwood Hall students brought home 10 gold medals, four silver medals and one bronze in 10 different course area challenges.

Level three make-up student Eve Williams won silver in the 'We love Manchester' themed media make-up and prosthetics round with her worker-bee inspired look.


Busy bee: Eve Williams

"I think we did so well as a team. Everybody's work was of a very high standard and we really seemed to wow some of the judges," she said. "Our tutors did a great job of preparing us for the event and giving us some self-belief, they deserve a lot of credit for the results. The whole competition was a great experience and has given me a lot of confidence in my abilities and in my targets of starting a career in the hair and beauty industry."


Cooking up a storm: Molly Coupe with judges

Her fellow learner Molly Couple won gold in the individual level three food prep and cook round, which involved cooking a three-course meal.

"I was really happy to win. I've had so much support from my family and friends. They have been all over Facebook sharing their excitement about it," she explained. "The competition was really tough, I was surprised to actually win my category! The experience I've gained at Hopwood Hall's Riverside Restaurant definitely prepared me for it."

The competing colleges were Hopwood Hall College, Trafford College, Bolton College, Bury College, Salford College, Oldham College, Tameside College, Stockport College, The Manchester College and Wigan & Leigh College.


The college's sport and UPS team


Hair and beauty team

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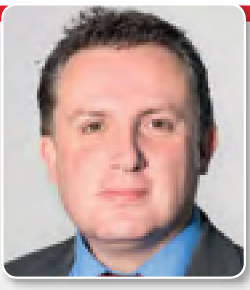
If you have a story you'd like to see featured in campus round-up, get in touch by emailing **samantha.king@feweek.co.uk**

Movers & Shakers

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



Kelvin Nash

Principal and CEO, Kendal College

Start date May 2018

Previous job
Vice-principal, Heart of Worcestershire College

Interesting fact
Kelvin has worked in the further education sector for 19 years.

Tom Bewick

Chief executive, the Federation of Awarding Bodies

Start date May 2018

Previous job
President, Transatlantic Apprenticeship Exchange Forum (ongoing)

Interesting fact
Tom has been a council member for Brighton and Hove city council since May 2015.

Robert Nitsch CBE

Chief operating officer, Institute for Apprenticeships

Start date TBC

Previous job
Personnel director, British Army

Interesting fact
Robert joined the army in 1983, and worked his way up to roles including director of manning and chief employment officer, and chief of staff to the adjutant-general.

Jane Downes

Chair, FDQ awarding organisation

Start date March 2018

Previous job
Independent veterinary consultant (ongoing)

Interesting fact
Jane also currently chairs the Pig Health and Welfare Council.

Louise Sui

Managing director, CPL Training

Start date April 2018

Previous job
Commercial director, CPL Training

Interesting fact
Louise has judged a number of hospitality awards, including 'BII licensee of the year'.

If you want to let us know of any new faces at the top of your college, training provider or awarding organisation please let us know by emailing news@feweek.co.uk

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

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next edition

Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

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: Vhari Bannister