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EDITION 268



DFE SPECIAL TREATMENT FOR COLLEGE IN £37M DEBT

Lambeth College given permission for £1.3m subcontracting
to meet short-term funding objectives after AEB shortfall

Exclusive JUDE BURKE JUDE@FEWEEK.CO.UK

See page 8

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College in £1.4m legal battle with Nigerian state unblocks staff access to *FE Week*

BILLY CAMDEN
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Highbury College has unblocked access to *FE Week* on its internet servers following a heavy backlash from government officials and the national media.

The Portsmouth-based college pulled the shutters down on this newspaper's website last week following an exposé about its ill-fated venture in Nigeria.

But the fallout from the attempt to suppress the media coverage led to the story being published to a wider audience, following articles by the Press Gazette, Private Eye, and Portsmouth's The News.

High-profile alumni from Highbury College's renowned journalism centre even took to Twitter to condemn the action.

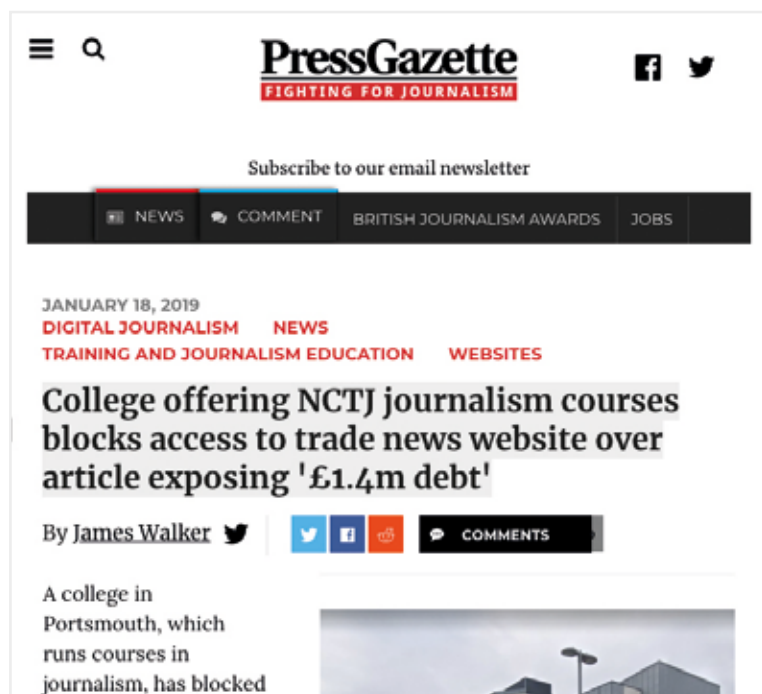
A spokesperson for the college confirmed on Wednesday that access to *FE Week* has now been reopened on its internal internet servers, but would not comment further.

The college previously said it blocked this newspaper's website as it deemed the story, which revealed Highbury was locked in a £1.4 million legal battle with the Nigerian state and gave an insight into its wider financial position, to be "inappropriate" and "inaccurate".

This was despite the story being based on the college's own board minutes and accounts.

The college said it had a "duty of care" to protect its students and staff from such material.

Upon hearing about the unprecedented action, skills minister Anne Milton said she was "shocked",



Press Gazette reports on *FE Week*'s website being blocked by Highbury College

while Ofsted's chief inspector said the decision to block *FE Week* was "astonishing and concerning".

Dominic Ponsford, the editor-in-chief at the Press Gazette, pointed out that Highbury College must have never heard of the "Streisand effect" – "whereby attempting to hide or censor a piece of information you have the unintended consequence of publicising it far more widely than it would have been anyway".

Following articles in Press Gazette and Private Eye, Tom Edwards, a broadcast journalist for the BBC and former Highbury student, tweeted that he was "embarrassed" for the college which "prides itself on training tomorrow's journalists, clamping down on press freedom".

"Clueless and cringeworthy," he added.

Mark Austin, a news presenter

at Sky News and Highbury College alumni, tweeted: "I don't think blocking legitimate news sites is a good idea. I support freedom of the press. I liked my time at @HighburyCollege."

It comes at a time when *FE Week* continues to press the college to respond to a Freedom of Information request submitted last year.

This newspaper requested the principal's corporate expense claims for the past five years nearly 70 working days ago, but Highbury has chosen not to provide the information.

This is despite FOI law stating responses should take no longer than 20 working days, or 40 working days if the organisation needs to apply the public-interest test.

An FOI expert believes the repeated refusal to release the material is "skirting with a possible criminal offence".

FE Week has reported the college to the Information Commissioner's Office for their failure to comply with the Freedom of Information Act.

The spokesperson for Highbury previously said: "We look forward to having a positive conversation with the Information Commissioner's Office about the vexatious nature of your FOI request."

From a previous FOI, it was revealed that Highbury's principal, Stella Mbubaegbu, used college cash to pay for a first-class return flight from London to Dallas at a cost of £4,132.

The college has refused to say whether or not this flight was work related.



Private Eye's article on Highbury College blocking *FE Week*'s website

36 providers in running for Manchester's AEB

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority has revealed the providers that have made it through to the final round of its adult education budget tender.

Ahead of its takeover of the AEB for its region in 2019/20, the authority is undertaking a two-stage process for procurement.

The first stage was completed in December where providers

submitted a "supplier assessment questionnaire". From this, 36 bidders met the GMCA's minimum scoring criteria and made it through to stage two.

They will now be invited to tender for a slice of Manchester's AEB funding, with the results expected to be revealed in April.

Visit <https://bit.ly/2RQ4Cg3> to see which providers made it through.

Charity to test new maths resits curriculum

A maths charity has been awarded £60,000 to investigate the "feasibility" of a new GCSE curriculum in the subject for post-16 resit students.

Mathematics in Education and Industry will run a review independent of government, with the aim of developing a curriculum that has a greater focus on applying maths in real-life situations.

The project will include a small-scale study to assess the suitability of the curriculum as a basis for an alternative to the existing GCSE maths, which many resit students find tough to succeed in.

Over 170,000 young people resat GCSE maths in the summer of 2018, but only 23.7 per cent achieved at least a grade 4 or equivalent.

The project will report towards the end of 2019.

Top-performing college pulls out of Saudi work

A college has terminated its contract with the controversial Saudi Arabian Colleges of Excellence programme due to "ongoing delays" in receiving payments resulting in an alleged £500,000 debt.

Dudley College, rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted, began work with the Saudi government in 2011 and has taken part in various ventures in the

country over the last eight years.

But it felt it had "no choice but to terminate this contract" after repeated failures by the programme to pay the college.

Principal Lowell Williams said the situation was "very frustrating" as "we believe we have been making a real difference to the lives of young women in the Kingdom".

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News

New Learndirect owner wins £20m in ESFA contracts

BILLY CAMDEN
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Exclusive

Learndirect has started to win government funding to deliver skills training again, after its new owner secured more than £20 million worth of European Social Fund contracts.

FE Week understands that the nation's former largest FE provider won the funding, which is administered by the Education and Skills Funding Agency and used to deliver employment and skills support to disadvantaged people, in four different areas across England following a recent tender.

It now has contracts worth more than £10 million to deliver programmes in the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership, while £3 million is to be used across Derby and Nottingham, £4 million in the West of England and nearly £3.5 million in North East London.

The win comes six months after Learndirect had its various ESFA

contracts, which totalled nearly £100 million, wound down following a damning grade four Ofsted report which surfaced in August 2017.

The training provider came under new ownership in June following a sale to Wayne Janse van Rensburg, allowing his firm Dimensions Training Solutions to take the reins.

The £20 million ESF contracts will be run by "Dimensions Training Solutions – Learndirect".

Mr Janse van Rensburg was approached but declined to comment as the results were in a 10-day standstill period, which ends on January 28.

Dimensions Training Solutions – Learndirect is nowhere near the size that it used to be, after Mr Janse van Rensburg sold its apprenticeships business in July and the government banned the company from being able to gain funding from the adult education budget following failures by its old leadership team.

It can however bid for and win ESF cash, which is not inspected by Ofsted because much of it does not fall under "education or training".

Although Learndirect's £20 million

contracts sound like a large win on the face of it, it is actually less than half of what the provider won during a previous ESF tender.

In 2017, the provider secured 26 deals worth almost £49.5 million.

The nation's former biggest FE provider hit the headlines two years ago when it took Ofsted to the High Court over its 'inadequate' rating.

Learndirect lost the case in August 2017, which affected over 1,600 jobs and 70,000 learners.

But instead of terminating Learndirect's contracts three months after the verdict, which is normal ESFA practice following a grade four report for a private provider, the agency allowed it to wind down its contracts until July 2018.

The special treatment caused widespread anger across the FE sector and sparked investigations by the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr Janse van Rensburg described his takeover of the provider as "a baptism of fire", especially as he had to sell sister company Learndirect Apprenticeships Ltd almost immediately to PeoplePlus,



Wayne Janse van Rensburg

who had previously made an offer that Learndirect rejected.

The new owner has spoken before to FE Week about his vision for the rest of the non-apprenticeship business and rebuilding the brand.

"Part of my vision, and people might

question my sanity here, is to bring the brand back into the forefront of education," he said. "I have big things I need to do in terms of reputation repair."

"I plan to keep the business and run Learndirect Ltd as a commercial training provider," he added.

Six University Technical Colleges received ESFA bailouts totalling almost £1m last year

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS
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Six university technical colleges received bailouts from the government totalling almost £1 million last year, with the ESFA's funding chief warning she doesn't want to create a "culture of dependency".

The funding is given in "exceptional cases ... where additional funding is absolutely necessary to stabilise the school's finances and ensure minimal disruption to pupils' education".

Figures obtained by the Local Schools Network show two of the UTCs which received the grants – Sir Charles Kao UTC and Heathrow Aviation Engineering UTC – have since closed and reopened with a new sponsor under the fresh start process, becoming BMAT STEM Academy and Heathrow UTC.

They received £255,000 and £20,000 respectively. UTC@harbourside, which received £300,000, is set to close in August.

Eileen Milner, chief executive of the ESFA, told the Education Show conference on Thursday she did not

have "a book of blank cheques to hand out" to struggling providers.

In response to a question from FE Week's sister-paper Schools Week on the grants, Ms Milner said it was "inevitable that we have a recourse to this".

"We wouldn't want a dependency culture, where people feel that we are going to be able to get this cheque, because the bar for getting access to this money is high."

Three UTCs which remained open also received the grants last year. Wigan UTC was given £169,000 by the Department for Education, while the JCB Academy received £150,000.

Cambridge UTC, which ditched the UTC brand and renamed itself as Cambridge Academy for Science and Technology when it joined the multi-academy trust Parkside Federation Academies in 2017, received £101,000.

FE Week understands UTCs that remain open may be expected to pay back some of the money.

Phil Reynolds, senior manager at Kreston Reeves accountants, said the money was likely to be emergency grants "arisen from investigations or rebrokerage or strong negotiation".

"It's a shame that so much money is



Eileen Milner

having to be used by the DfE to make sure children still receive an education where there have been issues with schools."

The most recent government figures show that six UTCs have closed down entirely, while seven others have been rebrokered under the fresh start

process, which involves finding a new sponsor and having their previous Ofsted grades wiped.

In November, FE Week reported that almost two thirds of UTCs overestimated their student numbers in 2017/18 and will have to repay funding to the government.

An investigation by this paper in October found that the DfE had handed over more than £2.3 million in the past five years to UTCs, studio schools and post-16 free schools that never even opened.

Julia Harnden, funding specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders, said the grants were given to support providers in "challenging circumstances".

"The intention is to safeguard the future of the schools involved and provide stability for their pupils, which is laudable.

"But we also need to be sure public money is being used well and if schools are later closing down that is clearly a concern. It also highlights the need to ensure that new schools are sustainable at the outset and that pupils and staff don't end up with the anxiety and disruption caused by a school closing."

A spokesperson for the DfE said deficit funding will be provided to trusts "in exceptional circumstances to protect the education of children".

The Baker Dearing Trust, which represents UTCs, was contacted for comment.

Former learner warns he'll take DfE and SLC to court over FE loans scandal

BILLY CAMDEN

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Exclusive

Pressure is mounting on the government to resolve an FE loans scandal that left hundreds of students with huge debts but no qualifications, as one former learner warns he'll take the matter to court.

FE Week has been campaigning since 2017 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 campaign secured a partial win in its early stages after the Department for Education and Student Loans Company agreed to defer repayments firstly until April 2018, and then again until April 2019.

But as the reprieve draws to a close

the government has told FE Week it is still yet to decide whether it will write off the debt, or begin forcing those affected to start repaying the loans which have been accruing hundreds of pounds more in interest.

The SLC, who the debt is with, would not provide a separate comment.

Shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden has been lobbying to write the loans off through parliament and believes it is a "disgrace" that, two years on from the scandal, a solution has not been found.

"If this were in the private sector it would be a classic case of mis-selling," he said. "The DfE should find a solution now and not continue prevaricating."

Mr Marsden promised to submit further parliamentary questions to keep the pressure on the department.

Loans learners have been unable to finish courses after three firms, John Frank Training, Edudo Ltd and Focus Training & Development Ltd, went bust in late 2016 and early 2017.

FE Week reported last February that

just 129 of the 344 students affected had been transferred to other providers.

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

Asim Shaheen, 51, was among the ex-learners at John Frank Training. The chef still had an outstanding debt of £8,000, plus interest, when the firm collapsed.

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 told FE Week this week that the student loans company is "still after us, they are saying I'm liable for it" but he will "argue that in court".

"The leaders and administrators need to sort out who is actually liable for this," he said.

"They sent the whole lot of the money before I even finished the course directly to a provider.

"I haven't got any qualification to show for it so the product that I loaned

for doesn't exist.

"I will let a judge decide what the law states when you are taking money or loaning it."

Mr Shaheen offered this message to government: "Hold the people who have defrauded you responsible. Do not come to the normal working-day people who are not responsible for this situation."

"Students have been left in the lurch," he continued. "The government needs to go back to the roundtable and say 'hang on, is this a viable thing that we are doing for our public?'"

Lukasz Pacuk, a 34-year-old former carpentry learner with Edudo, said he has had no contact from the DfE or SLC since the provider's collapse but still has a large loan of nearly £5,000.

"It is unfair for the government to make us repay the loan with interest," he told FE Week.

"It has caused me a lot of stress and depression. A very sad, bad situation.

There's still the pressure that I have to pay a large sum of the loan."

A DfE spokesperson said: "We



Asim Shaheen

have already committed to offering a practical solution for every learner with an Advanced Learner Loan whose training providers have ceased trading, including deferring loan repayments while alternatives are considered.

"We are considering how we can further help learners that may be affected by the closure of training providers."



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

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News

College students see their petition on funding debated in parliament

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Exclusive

Creating a petition signed by tens of thousands of people and a debate attended by as many as 50 MPs is no mean feat, especially when you're juggling A-levels.

But that is just what seven learners at Brockenhurst College did. They set up a petition in October after finding out how funding for their education had been cut by almost 30 per cent from 2009 to 2019.

As skills minister Anne Milton put it at the debate: "I think we can all agree that securing a debate in parliament is a pretty impressive piece of A-level project work."

It's especially extraordinary considering only 47 petitions have been debated in this session of parliament; on topics including Brexit, immigration policy and the treatment of animals.

We spoke to three of the organisers, Brockenhurst learners Charlotte Jones, Hannah Powis and Laura Whitcher, who went to parliament on Monday for a debate on their petition, which called for the funding to colleges to be increased to the same level as school funding.

Charlotte enjoyed seeing "such a big turnout of MPs to discuss our petition and it was great to see how many people are passionate about the same issues



"The issue is fundamental and needs to be addressed."

Hannah Powis

as us".

What Hannah picked up on was "the amount of cross-party support we had".

Laura said: "It was really great to see the process of how everything happens and how we can affect that and especially seeing the government working so well together."

Asked why they wanted to start campaigning after hearing about the cuts to FE funding, Hannah said: "We thought it was really important for sustainability to make sure we are able to continue providing the services we get from the college for future generations.

"Things like mental health support, which the college is really good at; we want to ensure that's stable for future students."

Laura said: "We knew there were funding cuts in education across the board but especially in FE and colleges.

"But we were never aware how significant they were.

"We felt it was important to educate other people and make sure they were aware this was happening to us.

"There is a real sense of inequality in comparison to the funding under-16s get in comparison to 16-18 education. Considering you have to stay in school until you're 18, I think it really doesn't make sense why we would be funded any differently."

Their hard work has taken them to parliament several times before with local MP Julian Lewis.

Following this week's debate, Mr Lewis said: "The fact that a few dedicated students in a first-class college can turn their individual concerns into a full-scale parliamentary debate at



Westminster speaks volumes for their character and for the encouragement given to them by the college staff and its principal."

Asked what they wanted to happen next, Hannah said she wanted to see meetings with the Treasury about bringing FE funding up to scratch.

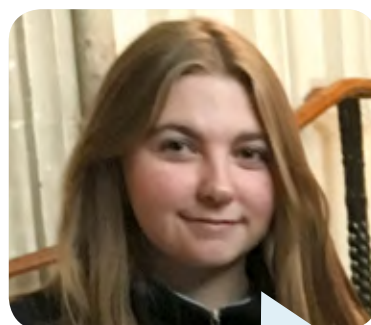
"We just want to carry on putting pressure on politicians," Hannah added. "It's really important to keep up the pressure and make sure people are still listening.

"The issue is fundamental and needs to be addressed."

Laura said: "Financial reports come out in March. I'd like to see they had taken what we said to heart.

"In the end, we'd like more funding." The learners were expecting much of what skills minister Anne Milton said in her speech responding to the debate, but said she seemed to agree with the points their petition raised.

Laura said she was impressed by Ms



"It's important for students to know they can affect change."

Charlotte Jones

MPS KEEP UP THE FUNDING PRESSURE

College funding looks likely to continue making waves in Westminster, after a group of MPs sponsored another call for an increase.

Coventry South MP Jim Cunningham has proposed an early day motion which has been signed by a cross-party group of 14 MPs so far.

The motion reads: "This House calls upon the government to urgently increase funding for colleges across the country; urges the government to work with trade unions to ensure college staff receive a long-overdue pay rise so that their pay is put on a par with that of school staff; and recognises the huge importance of colleges to the UK, especially those that

specialise in working with students who have disabilities and additional educational needs such as Hereward College in Coventry."

Early day motions are submitted for debates in the House of Commons but have no specific date attached for the debate.

Very few early day motions are ever discussed, but they can be used to demonstrate support for a particular cause - in this case, college funding.

Several of the sponsors for the motion spoke in Monday's debate on college funding, including Mr Cunningham, Hartlepool MP Mike Hill, Easington MP Grahame Morris and Crewe and Nantwich MP Laura Smith.

Milton: "She really stood out in how much she was listening to everyone's information and how she was not brushing anything off, she really did care."

Reflecting on the whole journey, Charlotte said: "I think the fact we were able to start this petition together and it's become so big with just us and the help of the staff inspires me to know if any other issues need to be addressed, I am able to do that, so I would definitely do more campaigning in the future."

Hannah added: "It shows us how important democracy is and how important it is to be directly involved and participate in what's going on.

"Younger people can sometimes get

disillusioned and feel disconnected from it, but this has shown our voices are important and people care what we have to say."

On whether they would encourage other FE students to campaign on funding, Charlotte said: "Definitely. Actually, students within our own college have found issues they're passionate about and made petitions and started campaigning."

A learner in Laura's law class has made a petition on the cost of travel for education purposes for young people.

Charlotte added: "It's important for students to know they can affect change. They are not just an effect of what happens in parliament."

"There is a real sense of inequality in comparison to the funding under-16s get in comparison to 16-18 education."

Laura Whitcher

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News

College in £37m debt given permission to carry out banned tactical subcontracting

JUDE BURKE

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From front

Exclusive

The Department for Education appears to have given a cash-strapped college special treatment, after it endorsed subcontracting to meet short-term funding objectives.

Lambeth College, which is dependent on government bailouts, "embarked on a significant programme of subcontracting" to make up for a recruitment shortfall last year, according to its recently published 2017/18 accounts.

The college itself has insisted that the set-up fitted with its "long-term strategy" and wasn't the result of "short-term tactics" – a view the DfE has agreed with.

"We work closely with the college, as we do all colleges, to make sure they are working in line with subcontracting rules," a department spokesperson said.

But evidence from the college's board minutes and accounts reveal a different story.

Tactical subcontracting is banned under the Education and Skills Funding

Agency's funding rules, which state that providers "must not subcontract to meet short-term funding objectives".

An observer from the ESFA has been present at all Lambeth College board meetings since 2016, following intervention by the FE commissioner in the September of that year.

It's currently days away from a merger with London South Bank University which has been in the offing since December 2016.

According to Lambeth's accounts, the college "failed to recruit sufficient adult students to study on college premises during the course of 2017/18" and "in order to reduce the loss of income" it "embarked on a significant programme of subcontracting".

"To partially compensate for the number of adult students being taught on campus falling below the budgeted numbers almost £1 million more was spent with the college's partners to educate adult students off-campus than had been planned," the accounts said.

The college is "restricted in its use of subcontractors" because of its financial situation, minutes from a November 2017 board meeting state.

The cap means it can't subcontract more than it did in 2016/17, nor can it



2017/18 sub-contractors were all organisations who contracted with the College in 2016/17. The College had agreed initial levels of delivery with each contractor as shown on the spreadsheet. There was also the possibility for further sub-contracting within the total envelope available if the Corporation makes the strategic decision to sub-contract any under-delivery in 2017/18 once the financial impact of enrolment is quantified following the submission of R03 (2017/18).

Lambeth College's November 2017 board minutes

work with new subcontractors.

After having "agreed initial levels of delivery with each contractor", the minutes showed there was the "possibility for further sub-contracting within the total envelope available" if the college "makes the strategic decision to sub-contract any under-delivery in 2017/18 once the financial impact of enrolment is quantified".

Minutes from a meeting in March revealed the college to be £1.6 million below its AEB allocation for the year, which was £10,912,170 according to ESFA figures.

The college's published list of subcontractors showed that 12 providers delivered adult education provision worth almost £3.7 million on the college's behalf over the year.

Seven of these contracts, worth a combined total of £1.3 million, started in 2018 – with one, worth £620,000 with the Dhunay Corporation, lasting for just two weeks from July 16 to 31.

On seeing evidence of what appears to be special treatment, Mark Dawe, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, said: "The new ESFA rules are there for good reason.

"If they are abused, everyone will lose out, because the government might ban the practice altogether – including genuine examples of where subcontracting is obviously serving an employer's interests."

"The agency must crack down on tactical subcontracting," he urged.

A spokesperson for Lambeth College

said its decision to increase the amount of provision it subcontracted "meant that we maintained the level of subcontracting with the previous year rather than achieving a reduction".

"This decision was compliant with our long-term strategy, whereby activity levels do not decline prior to merger, and was not the result of short-term tactics."

The ESFA's ban on tactical subcontracting was introduced in 2015.

In a letter to the agency that year the former business secretary Vince Cable warned about "levels of short-term tactical subcontracting that are causing concern" despite efforts by the-then Skills Funding Agency to "enhance the controls on subcontracting in the last two years".

LAMBETH COLLEGE'S FINANCIAL TROUBLES – A POTTED HISTORY

Lambeth's troubles began in 2016, when a "significant deterioration" in its cashflow prompted an intervention by the former FE commissioner Sir David Collins.

His report, based on a visit that September, found problems with the college's finances that were so severe it was "no longer sustainable" unless it merged.

In December 2016 the college announced it would "join the London South Bank University family in principle".

The merger had been due to complete by July 2017, but was subsequently put on hold while the college went through an FE commissioner-led structure and prospects appraisal to find an alternative partner.

That process concluded in March 2018 with a recommendation to stick to the original plan, and a new merger date was set for the

end of the year.

The merger date was put back again, to January 31. A college spokesperson said this week that the plan "is very much on track, with proposed entry date for joining the LSBU family being only a few days away".

Meanwhile, the college has been dependent on government bailouts for the past two years.

According to its 2017/18 accounts, it owes almost £15.5 million in exceptional financial support, and has agreed a support package from the restructuring facility worth £15.8 million.

"The college made a further large loss in 2017/18, it remains dependent on exceptional financial support from the government and its financial position is accurately described as 'inadequate'", the accounts said.

The College's failure to achieve all of these objectives is explained further below. In outline the College failed to recruit sufficient adult students to study on college premises during the course of 2017/18. In order to reduce the loss of income the College embarked on a significant programme of sub-contracting. The combination of the loss of income and the extra sub-contracting costs led to a worse deficit than planned. Furthermore Barclays Bank declined to waive the breach of financial covenants at the end of the year thus placing all of

Whilst staff costs were reduced by almost £2M and other operating expenses by over £1M this was not enough to match the reduction in income. Furthermore in order to partially compensate for the number of adult students being taught on campus falling below the budgeted numbers almost £1M more was spent with the college's partners to educate adult students off-campus than had been planned.

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News

Colleges will put learners on inappropriate courses without funding increase, warns Ofsted boss

JUDE BURKE
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Colleges are likely to increase the amount of courses that “attract the most learners” but which don’t offer “real, long-term life prospects” if funding isn’t increased, Ofsted’s chief inspector has warned.

Amanda Spielman appeared before MPs on the public accounts committee on Wednesday, where she was asked about the impact of cuts of the quality of FE provision.

“This is an area where I genuinely think to deliver what we expect of post-16, it’s hard to see how they can do without an increase in base funding rate,” she said.

Without such an increase, Ms Spielman said she would “expect to see continued efforts to slant FE provision towards the things that can be provided most cheaply” or that “attract the most learners in but don’t necessarily match people” with “the local labour market” or provide “real,

long-term life prospects”.

“I’d expect to see some clearer decline in the quality of teaching,” she added.

Her comments this week follow her controversial speech at the Association of Colleges annual conference in November last year, when she referenced Ofsted research that found a “mismatch between the numbers of students taking courses and their future employment in the industry” in certain level two subjects – particularly arts and media.

At the time, she questioned whether colleges were “putting the financial imperative of headcount in the classroom ahead of the best interests of the young people taking up their courses”.

This week’s hearing wasn’t the first time that Ms Spielman has spoken about the impact of funding pressures on FE provision and called for the base rate for 16 to 19-year-olds to be increased.

In October she wrote to the PAC to offer her “strong view” that the

rate should be increased in the forthcoming government spending review, due sometime this year.

She said that the “real-term cuts to FES funding are affecting the sustainability and quality of FES provision”, but for the first time said this was now “based on our inspection evidence”, and called on the government to take action.

However, enquiries by *FE Week* at the time found only three published inspection reports that referred to stretched resources – and none that said quality had reduced because of funding issues.

Ofsted’s 2017/18 annual report, published in December, showed that a higher proportion of general FE colleges are now rated ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ than last year – from 67 per cent to 76 per cent.

But there are also fewer colleges than in previous years – 178 at the end of 2017/18, compared with 189 in 2016/17 and 207 the year before.

Ms Spielman told MPs this week that the “profile of inspection outcomes



Amanda Spielman

from last year” shouldn’t be taken “as a definitive statement”.

The recent area reviews of post-16 education and training, which led to a large number of failing colleges merging, “made the profile quite lumpy”, she said.

“It is an area about which I’m significantly concerned,” she said.

This week’s hearing came two days after as many as 50 MPs came together to debate a petition calling for FE funding to be increased.

There was unanimous condemnation from all sides over the real-terms cuts to funding, with rates for 16 and 17-year-olds having been frozen at £4,000 since 2013.

GLA ploughs ahead with subcontracting fees cap - but DfE still dragging its heels

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The Greater London Authority is one step closer to capping management fees when it takes control of the adult education budget next year, but the government is still yet to make a decision for the rest of the country.

In a draft rulebook for providers in London, published last month ahead of devolution of the adult education budget in September, the GLA confirmed that it is likely to introduce a 20 per cent cap on top-slices charged by prime providers to manage subcontractors.

“We will consider a retention of up to 20 per cent of funding to manage delivery subcontractors as a maximum cap and would not expect providers to retain more than this,” the draft rulebook reads.

“In exceptional cases, we will consider higher retention amounts and then only if there is a compelling rationale. This will be assessed on a

case-by-case basis.”

It comes after *FE Week* revealed that London mayor Sadiq Khan first thought of introducing a cap on the controversial management fees in September.

Under the current system, the Education and Skills Funding Agency administers the AEB for the whole country, with no cap on top-slices.

But *FE Week* has reported extensively on examples where the management fees have risen to as much as 40 per cent.

The government was told that it needs to get a grip on the “outrageous and unjustifiable” subcontracting market which has become a “money-maker” for training providers as a result of these high fees, by a panel of FE experts during an education select committee hearing in March last year.

The ESFA was meant to publish its first ever policy for top-slicing in subcontracting in August, but it kicked this decision into the long grass as it needed to conduct further investigations.

The agency was then supposed to provide an update on the guidance last month, but this has not been forthcoming.

An ESFA spokesperson told *FE Week* this week that its decision on management fees would be revealed in “due course”.

The Association of Employment and Learning Providers, which developed best-practice guidance on subcontracting including a 20 per cent cap on top-slicing with HOLEX and training provider group Collab last year, has welcomed the GLA’s lead on the approach and urged the government to hurry up.

“It’s great the GLA has set an important and much-needed precedent in adopting sector best practice and we’re encouraged that other combined authorities are now considering the same percentage as either a hard cap or good practice,” AELP chief executive Mark Dawe said.

“With funding so tight, the government should be backing up its own words on maximising the amount

of money that reaches frontline delivery as soon as possible and this is why it’s so disappointing that it has missed its deadline for publishing new expectations in respect of apprenticeships.”

In early 2018, the GLA revealed that it planned to move away from paying providers to deliver qualifications, to paying for wider outcomes such as progression into work.

But the move to an outcomes-based funding system will not happen straight away and has not been included in the GLA’s new draft funding rules.

It will only be introduced once “there is confidence that there is sufficient data to allow robust payment models to be developed”.

FE Week also revealed earlier this year that the GLA is having to recruit a huge team of new bureaucrats to hand out the budget to London’s training providers from 2019, with most of their wages paid every year by top-slicing £3 million from the AEB.

Under the devolved system, seven



Sadiq Khan

combined authorities will take control of £600 million of the AEB to administer within their area.

The devolution of the budget is a hot topic at the moment, with *FE Week* organising a debate in parliament for Monday hosted by the shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden, where *FE Week* editor Nick Linford and Dr Susan Pember OBE of Holey will argue against and in favour of the policy, respectively.

Providers that plan for less than 20% off-the-job training will have 'all funding recovered'

JUDE BURKE

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Exclusive

Apprenticeships found to be planned with less than the minimum 20 per cent off-the-job training will be "ineligible and all funding would be recovered", FE Week can reveal.

The off-the-job training policy has prompted controversy and confusion since it was introduced in 2017.

In an attempt to provide some clarity, the Department for Education published guidance earlier this month that attempted to bust certain "myths" about the rule. It didn't, however, clarify what the sanctions are for non-compliance.

FE Week asked the DfE when it would take money back from providers that didn't comply with it, and was told those who fail to plan sufficient hours would have all the funding clawed back, while others will be judged on a case-by-case

basis.

"If a provider is not providing 20 per cent off-the-job training for learners, we would assess the situation and decide a course of action which could include taking back funding," a spokesperson said.

He then clarified that it will ask non-compliant providers for apprentices' commitment statements, for evidence of how much off-the-job training they planned to deliver.

Those that are found to have planned to deliver less than the minimum would have their funding recovered as the programme would be considered ineligible.

The spokesperson explained that: "If the commitment statement is not compliant then this makes the programme ineligible and all funding would be recovered."

However, those that intended to deliver at least 20 per cent but only had evidence for less than the minimum would be given the opportunity to provide additional evidence.

Since the beginning of 2018/19 providers have had the option of completing a new data field in the individual learner record to show that they are complying with the rule.

It is not compulsory, and the DfE has yet to decide whether it will be in the future – in recognition of the fact that completing it is "burdensome" for some providers, the spokesperson said.

The 20 per cent off-the-job training rule is widely cited as the biggest barrier to apprentice recruitment, but others – including the skills minister, Anne Milton – have insisted it is a key element of a high-quality apprenticeship.

It requires all apprentices to spend the equivalent of one day a week on activities relating to their course but which are different from their normal

working duties.

The DfE's "mythbusters" guidance, published in early January, aimed to combat widespread confusion about what the rule entails.

Among the myths it addresses are the mistaken belief that the training can be done in an apprentice's own time, and that it must be "delivered by a provider in a classroom, at an external location".

However, it doesn't provide any clarity over a recent policy change that affects how the 20 per cent is calculated.

Previously it was based on a 52-week year, including an apprentice's annual leave – but as of August 1, 2018 this leave entitlement must be deducted before working out how many off-the-job hours training an apprentice requires.

It means that the calculation to determine off-the-job

hours is different for apprentices who started before August 1, 2018, compared with those who started after.

An FE Week survey in March last year found that the sector considered the off-the-job training rule to be the single biggest barrier to apprenticeship recruitment.

It is considered to be particularly an issue for smaller companies who claim they can't afford to let apprentices spend a fifth of their time away from work.

Association of Employment and Learning Providers boss Mark Dawe has called for greater flexibility in the rule, particularly to allow apprentices to study in their own time.

If an apprentice is keen to study out of hours, and the employer and provider both agree to it, "why are we stopping them from doing that if they're getting the knowledge, skills and behaviour they need to get the apprenticeship?" he asked at last year's FE Week Annual Apprenticeships Conference.



Mark Dawe

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News

Long-delayed FE teacher apprenticeship standards ready for delivery next week

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Exclusive

Three FE teaching apprenticeship standards will be ready for delivery from next week following a successful funding-band appeal against the Institute for Apprenticeships, *FE Week* understands.

The trailblazer group developing the standards had accused the IfA of exceeding its powers after claiming the proposed funding bands were just half what they would cost to deliver.

But after four years of development and a long-running battle, an agreement has finally been reached which will see two of the three funding rates increase.

Ian Pryce, principal of trailblazer group member Bedford College, said: "We are planning to deliver from September and we are pleased our appeal was listened to and we are content with the outcome."

Originally, the IfA set the funding bands for the learning mentor, assessor coach and learning and skills teacher apprenticeship standards at between £5,000 and £9,000.

But these were binned after the trailblazer group successfully appealed against the process by which the bands were set.

FE Week understands the funding bands will now increase by £1,000 to £7,000 for the level four assessor coach standard, by £1,000 to £10,000 for the level five learning and skills teacher standard and will stay at £5,000 for the level three learning mentor apprenticeship standard.

The trailblazer leads for the three FE teaching apprenticeships were unable to comment about the outcome at the time *FE Week* went to press.

A spokesperson for the institute said: "The appeal that the Trailblazer group had previously submitted has been dealt with by the Institute.

"However, the final funding band recommendations are with the minister

for final approval. No announcement on the funding band levels will be made until she has reached her decision."

The trailblazer group appealed on the grounds the IfA had: failed to comply with agreed procedure; failed to take account of relevant information; made a decision based on a mistake of fact; and exceeded its powers.

The group's appeal was turned down on three out of four of these points, but "the appeal panel considered it was persuaded by some of your arguments" in the first point.

These related to the "transition of the process from the Education and Skills Funding Agency to the institute" and the "request from the trailblazer group regarding their attendance at route panel".

In July, the trailblazer group won their appeal and the three standards were sent back to the IfA's route panel for

new funding bands, which should have been put in place in September.

But the trailblazer group told *FE Week* in October that the panel had deferred its decision.

However, the three standards are expected to be marked "ready for delivery" next week.

The IfA has been reviewing the funding bands for 60 standards since May last year, at the request of the Department for Education.

It led to a considerable amount of controversy among the trailblazer groups for those apprenticeships, as some were faced with cuts to their funding band of up to £5,000.

Many sought a review of the IfA's decision which led to a huge increase of 425 per cent in appeals at the institute last year.

According to the



Ian Pryce

minutes from a November meeting of the IfA's approval and funding committee, there were eight appeals from trailblazer groups in 2017 and 42 in January 2018.

Out of all of the 2018 appeals: 21 were rejected, 13 were upheld, 13 were considered not in scope and three are pending a decision.

Several trailblazer groups did not appeal due to the process being limited to complaints about procedure and impropriety.

A spokesperson for the National Hairdressers Federation, a trailblazer group which did not appeal, said: "It was shocking to find out the funding band would be reduced.

"We received little explanation as to the decision, no hard evidence and no route for appeal.

"Several steering-group members wrote to ministers, strongly urging the decision to be reconsidered and outlining the detrimental effects on the hairdressing sector. Responses referred them back to the IfA."

College claims Institute of Technology bid 'not in jeopardy' despite Ofsted grade three

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Exclusive

A college that has plummeted two Ofsted grades from its previous 'outstanding' has insisted its bid to open an Institute of Technology is "not in jeopardy".

Swindon College was rated 'requires improvement' overall and in five out of eight headline fields in a report published on Tuesday and based on an inspection in December.

It was shortlisted by the Department for Education last May to open an IoT, but this week's verdict means it no longer meets the original application criteria – which stated that colleges must be rated at least 'good' overall by Ofsted.

However, a spokesperson for the college said that it had met "all of the quality criteria set" when it submitted its bid in time for the stage two deadline in November – the guidance for which is not publicly available and would not be

shared by the DfE or college.

"The IoT bid criteria is quite clear and therefore this is not in jeopardy," she added.

The college's new Ofsted grade "does not affect the evaluation" but "may be discussed at interview stage".

The DfE would not comment on Swindon College's IoT bid as it was "commercially sensitive".

IoTs were first mooted back in 2015, and it's expected that 10 to 15 of the institutes will be created.

They are intended to bring FE and HE providers together, along with employers, to deliver technical skills training with a particular focus on levels four and five, and will be backed by £170 million of capital funding between them.

Swindon's bid was submitted in March last year and would cost £17 million to deliver. If successful, it plans to train over a thousand higher level apprentices and students each year in digital and computing, advanced manufacturing, life science and creative industries.

The Swindon College spokesperson pointed out that the college's

apprenticeships and adult learning provision – which she said the IoT provision would be "predominantly focused on" – had both been rated 'good' by Ofsted in this week's report.

However, inspectors criticised the college's teachers for not "setting learners targets to help them to improve their vocational, English, mathematics and digital skills" – an area which the IoT would specialise in.

Inspectors also said leaders "have not secured sufficiently high standards across all types of provision".

But it was noted that Swindon had been through "challenging times" since its previous inspection in 2013.

This was attributed in part to the "many changes in staff and leadership": a "large number" of teachers and managers had left the college in that time, and a middle-management reorganisation in 2015/16 was "unsuccessful".

A college spokesperson said it had "identified our key areas for development and we are fully committed to implementing plans based on the report recommendations".



Swindon isn't the first shortlisted college to have slipped below the IoT minimum criteria after submitting its bid.

College group giant NCG has remained in the list of finalists, despite being downgraded to 'requires improvement' by Ofsted in June.

However, a DfE spokesperson said in July last year that colleges would need to be rated at least 'good' by the deadline for stage two applications – meaning NCG is unlikely to have progressed

further.

The fate of North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College's bid is also up in the air, after it was assessed as having 'inadequate' financial health by the Education and Skills Funding Agency in September – another key criteria for an IoT bid.

The successful IoT bidders are set to be announced in March, and the aim was for the first institutes to open in 2019 – although it is not clear if that is still the case.

Fully fund level three to five training in 'skills-shortage areas', AoC proposes

JUDE BURKE

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The adult education budget should be used to fully fund training at levels three to five in skills-shortage areas once the UK has left the EU, the Association of Colleges has urged.

It's one of a number of recommendations put forward in a new report, "Developing a Four Nations Colleges Blueprint for a post-Brexit economy", produced by the AoC along with its counterparts in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

It calls for a "radical rethink" of skills policy and investment, based on two priorities: raising the skills "baseline" to level three, which it says is "commensurate with the needs for the future labour market", and tackling intermediate and higher-level technical skills shortages at "local and regional level through college-employer partnerships".

To do this, it calls for a national

retraining programme which would offer "fully funded training in skills-shortage occupations or retraining for skilled employees in jobs at risk at levels three to five".

The "programme would form a relatively short-term investment to improve productivity, fill significant emerging skills gaps in priority areas", it said, and would be funded "through a ringfence of the adult education budget".

However, an AoC spokesperson was unable to say how much the policy would cost to introduce, or whether the association was calling for the AEB to be increased to cover it.

Instead, he said the paper was intended to "provoke debate and discussion".

Other recommendations include a "lifelong learning entitlement" which would be a "statutory entitlement to accredited education and training, relevant to identified labour-market opportunities, to at least level three" for adults who don't already have a

qualification at that level.

Like the national retraining programme, this would be funded through ringfencing the AEB, with individuals "able to access cash, allowing them to engage with education and training at the right time for them".

This recommendation was first put forward last September in the AoC's policy paper on an upgraded post-18 education system, at which time AoC chief executive David Hughes said it would cost an estimated £1 billion a year.

"This would involve the Department for Education reversing the 17.5 per cent cut to funding at age 18 and increasing the adult education budget to replace learner loans," the AoC said at the time.

The Four Nations report also calls for a "new social contract" to better fund all full- and part-time FE and HE students, and provide an "entitlement to maintenance grants up to the equivalent of the Living Wage", as well as incentives to employers to encourage

them to release employees to retrain and upskill to level three.

"The challenges posed by a post-Brexit economy mean we're looking at a major slowdown in skilled migration," said Mr Hughes.

"Furthermore, the increasing skills gap in areas like STEM and other key sectors mean we need to focus our efforts more than ever on having a technical education system which meets the needs of all – allowing them to train and retrain throughout their careers, with colleges being central to this."

A government-led national retraining scheme has been in development for the past 18 months, after it was promised in the Conservative party election manifesto in 2017.

However, information on the scheme – including how it will operate, who will be eligible and how much it will cost – has so far been thin on the ground.

Representatives from its two partners on the scheme, the CBI and the

Developing a
Four Nations
College Blueprint
for a post-Brexit
economy



TUC, told MPs on the education select committee earlier this month that they were "pushing" the government to share more details.

So far £100 million has been committed to the scheme, but Iain Murray, senior policy officer at the TUC, said the actual cost of delivering it could be "billions".

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News

Management apprenticeships continue to soar as Milton 'thrilled' with rise in starts

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Exclusive

Management standards are continuing their reign as the most popular apprenticeships, according to the first statistics for 2018/19 published by the Department for Education this week.

The team leader/supervisor had the most starts of any standard in the first quarter of the year, while three other management standards were among the 20 most popular.

They were part of an overall picture in which starts were up 15 per cent on the same period in the previous year, from 114,400 to 132,000.

But this masked a drop in starts at both level two and for those aged 16 to 18, which both fell year-on-year by two per cent.

Starts are also 15 per cent down from where they were for the same period in 2016/17, before the levy was introduced.

Skills minister Anne Milton declared herself "thrilled" by the latest figures.

"Since we overhauled the apprenticeship system in 2017 more and more employers including leading firms like Royal Mail, Ernst & Young and Channel 4 are recognising the huge benefits apprentices are bringing to their workplaces," she said.

"I am thrilled to see the latest figures"

But Association of Employment and Learning Providers boss Mark Dawe said the drop at the lowest level was a "massive issue in the context of Brexit and social mobility".

There were 5,450 starts on the level three team leader/supervisor standard in the three months from August to October – an increase of more than 2,000 for the same period in 2017/18.

It was the most popular standard

| Apprenticeship level | 2017/18 provisional quarter 1 starts | 2018/19 provisional quarter 1 starts | Shift |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Level 2 | 52,000 | 51,100 | -2% |
| Level 3 | 50,800 | 57,800 | 14% |
| Level 4-7 | 11,600 | 23,100 | 99% |
| Total | 114,400 | 132,000 | 15% |

| Apprenticeship age | 2017/18 provisional quarter 1 starts | 2018/19 provisional quarter 1 starts | Shift |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Under 19 | 46,600 | 45,800 | -2% |
| 19-24 | 34,300 | 38,500 | 12% |
| 25+ | 33,400 | 47,800 | 43% |
| Total | 114,300 | 132,000 | 15% |

for the whole of the 2017/18, with over 17,200 starts.

A further 2,670 apprentices started on the level five operations/departmental manager standard, and 1,300 began the controversial level six chartered manager degree standard.

Meanwhile, the level seven senior

leader master's degree apprenticeship attracted 1,220 starters.

Between them the four were responsible for 14 per cent of the 76,300 starts on standards so far in 2018/19.

While starts at levels three and above continued to rise, those at level two dropped yet again.

There were 51,100 starts at this level in the first quarter of 2018/19, down two per cent compared with the same period in 2017/18.

Figures for apprentices aged 16 to 18 also fell: from 46,600 for the first three months of 2017/18 to 45,800 this year, a drop of two per cent.

This is part of an ongoing trend which has seen starts among the youngest apprentices fall by 23 per cent over the last four years – a higher proportion than any other age group.

The latest statistics come amid growing concern over the dominance of management apprenticeships and the impact they might be having on those at lower levels.

The rising number of starts on expensive standards such as the chartered manager degree apprenticeship is understood to causing pressure on the apprenticeships budget, with the IfA warning of a potential £500,000 overspend this year.

Ms Milton vowed earlier this month to "dig deeper" into the drop in level two apprenticeships, and whether it might be linked to the rise in management courses.

In addition to research set to be carried out by the DfE into the falling number of apprenticeships at level two, it was "fair to say" that similar research would be carried out on the rising number of higher-level starts, Ms Milton told *FE Week*.

And in December, Ofsted chief inspector Amanda Spielman voiced her concerns that "levy money is not being spent in the intended way", and said the watchdog had "seen examples where existing graduate schemes are in essence being rebadged as apprenticeships".

Most popular apprenticeship standards 1 August 2018 to 31 October 2018

| Standard name | Level | Starts 2017/18 | Starts Q1 2018/19 |
|--|-------|----------------|-------------------|
| Team Leader/Supervisor | 3 | 17,260 | 5,450 |
| Adult Care Worker | 2 | 10,240 | 3,290 |
| Installation Electrician/Maintenance Electrician | 3 | 5,490 | 3,240 |
| Lead Adult Care Worker | 3 | 8,380 | 3,160 |
| Hair Professional | 2 | 6,220 | 3,010 |
| Engineering Technician | 3 | 3,080 | 2,940 |
| Business Administrator | 3 | 4,820 | 2,920 |
| Operations/Departmental Manager | 5 | 7,960 | 2,670 |
| Customer Service Practitioner | 2 | 8,300 | 2,460 |
| Retailer | 2 | 4,510 | 2,350 |
| Accountancy / Taxation Professional | 7 | 3,710 | 2,080 |
| Hospitality Team Member | 2 | 5,740 | 1,840 |
| Assistant Accountant | 3 | 4,870 | 1,820 |
| Motor Vehicle Service and Maintenance Technician (light vehicle) | 3 | 2,510 | 1,340 |
| Chartered Manager | 6 | 2,310 | 1,300 |
| Senior Leader Master's Degree Apprenticeship (degree) | 7 | 550 | 1,220 |
| Carpentry and Joinery | 2 | 50 | 1,150 |
| Retail Team Leader | 3 | 2,780 | 1,050 |
| Hospitality Supervisor | 3 | 4,260 | 960 |
| Dental Nurse | 3 | 2,070 | 900 |

Take-up of advanced learner loans drops for a third consecutive year

BILLY CAMDEN

BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

The number of people taking out advanced learner loans in the first quarter of the academic year has fallen for the third year in a row – with figures for 2018/19 down 19 per cent on 2015/16.

Meanwhile, the overall number of learners starting a loan during 2017/18 fell by 13 per cent compared with 2016/17 – 83,900 dropping to 72,800, according to new figures published by the Student Loans Company on Thursday.

It comes despite the Student Loans Company lowering the eligibility age for a loan from 24 to 19 two years ago.

The number of people taking out an FE loan between August and October has fallen steadily since 2015/16, when 25,900 loans were taken out.

This number dropped by 10 per cent for the same period in 2016/17 to 23,200, and by a further two per cent in 2017/18 to 22,700.

From August to October 2018/19 just 21,100 people took out an FE loan, which

Advanced Learning Loan learners (August to October)

| Academic Year entry cohort | Learners | Annual fall | Fall since 15/16 |
|----------------------------|----------|-------------|------------------|
| 2015/16 | 25,900 | | |
| 2016/17 | 23,200 | -10% | -10% |
| 2017/18 | 22,700 | -2% | -12% |
| 2018/19 | 21,100 | -7.05% | -19% |

Analysis by FE Week. Source: <https://www.slc.co.uk/media/10197/slcosp012019.pdf>

represents an 8 per cent fall for the same period in 2017/18 and a 19 per cent drop on 2015/16.

Shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden was concerned by the figures and called on the government to “rethink” the entire advance learner loans policy.

“These stark figures show the government’s loans system continues to fail,” he said.

“Year on year half the allocated

money goes back to the Treasury unused.

“We have consistently said, since their introduction, and I reiterated this only this week in parliament, that expanding loans and scrapping grants was always going to have a negative impact on the take-up of vital adult courses.

“And as today’s awful statistics show, successive Tory-led governments have completely failed to understand the needs and concerns of mature learners

and others whose circumstances are likely to be very different to traditional entrants at 18.

“Government needs to rethink their policy now. Post-Brexit it’s crucial for people to retrain and reskill.”

The advanced learner loans policy hasn’t been a huge success since it was introduced in 2013.

At the end of 2017, FE Week revealed that a massive 58 per cent of FE loans funding – amounting to almost £1 billion

– had not been spent since the policy was introduced.

The shocking figure, which was discovered after a Freedom of Information request, was confirmed by the Students Loans Company, which confirmed that just £652 million in loan-funded provision had actually been delivered since 2013, against a massive £1.56 billion in allocations.

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

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

The Education and Skills Funding Agency had previously recognised they had a problem overseeing loans funded provision, particularly where much of it is subcontracted.

In August 2016 the agency banned new subcontracting contracts for advanced learner loans, with a complete ban coming into force last month.

In addition, growth requests for advanced learner loans were paused in September last year, while in November the ESFA introduced caps for how much loan money can be allocated to a provider.

The combination of all these points are likely to be the reason for the fall in the number of people taking out the loans.

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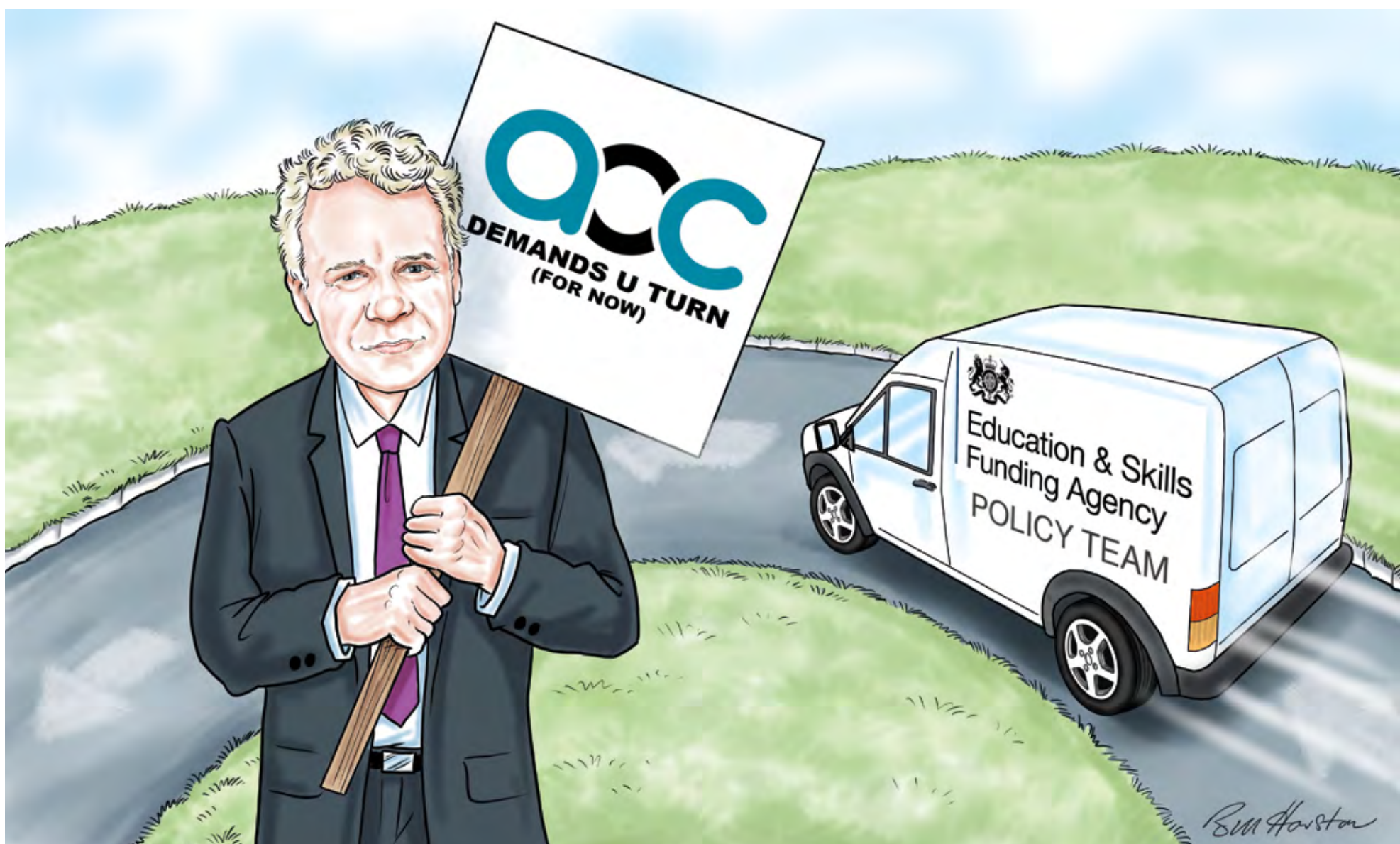
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News



DfE U-turn over study programme rule change after providers raise concerns

JUDE BURKE
JUDE@FEWEEK.CO.UK

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has U-turned on plans to bar 16- to 19-year-olds who have passed GCSE maths and English from following level one study programmes.

The announcement this week (pictured) comes after the agency received feedback from a "small but significant number of providers" on the rule change, originally announced last month.

"We have decided not to apply the change in 2019 to 2020 and will discuss the responses with the sector over the next few months," an ESFA update said.

"We will then decide whether to proceed with this change for academic year 2020 to 2021. We aim to confirm our decision on this by the end of May 2019."

The decision was welcomed by

Julian Gravatt, deputy chief executive of the Association of Colleges, who said it was a "good move".

Julian Gravatt, deputy chief executive of the Association of Colleges, said the "question about whether 16-year-olds with GCSE

"The AoC warned it would create wrong incentives for students"

passes should be enrolled on level one courses" was a good one to be raised but "the original plan to change the rules in 2019/20 was wrong" – not least because "colleges are halfway through the information and advice cycle".

"The skills that students are learning

on these construction and engineering courses are very different to what they're learning in school," he added.

"A number of colleges contacted us to query ESFA's original decision. We're pleased that they've listened and will be looking at the issue in more detail in the run-up to 2020."

The proposed rule change was first announced by the ESFA on December 18.

It said that learners "with prior attainment in English and maths at grade four or above that are undertaking a vocational qualification are not expected to be on an entry level or level one core aim" from 2019/20.

The change, included as an advance notification of a planned change to funding guidance, would still apply "even if they have no previous experience in the vocational area".

But it sparked warnings from the AoC that it would "create the wrong incentives for students".

A 16-year-old who wants to become

7. Information: Review of end of year 16 to 19 study programmes data for 2016 to 2017

In December, we [published our findings](#) following our review of end of year 16 to 19 study programmes data for 2016 to 2017. We proposed a change to the young people's funding guidance for academic year 2019 to 2020 about students with prior attainment in English and maths at grade 4 or above.

We received feedback on the change from a small but significant number of providers. We have decided not to apply the change in 2019 to 2020 and will discuss the responses with the sector over the next few months. We will then decide whether to proceed with this change for academic year 2020 to 2021. We aim to confirm our decision on this by the end of May 2019.

If you have any questions about this, please contact us using our [online enquiry form](#).

a bricklayer or carpenter may start with a level one course and "it may not make sense to penalise them for passing their maths and English GCSEs first time around," Mr Gravatt said at the time.

One college leader took to Twitter to voice his concerns about the proposed rule.

"Think there are a fair number of young people starting their vocational journey at level one nationally who do have their maths and English," Jerry White, deputy principal at City College Norwich, tweeted.

"Maths and English GCSE does not prep young people for laying bricks very well in my experience."



Principal & Chief Executive



Location: Fareham, Hampshire **Salary:** £110,000 - £120,000 **Closing Date:** Monday 11th February 2019

Our Successes:

- “Outstanding” Ofsted November 2017
- “TES FE Awards for FE College of the Year” February 2018
- “Nominated for TES Apprenticeship Programme of the Year November” 2018
- Setting the agenda for improving teaching and learning for post-16 Maths with investment from the Department for Education to develop a regional “Centre of Excellence in Basic Maths” – awarded October 2018
- Fareham College wins Apprenticeship Initiative Award at Constructing Excellence SECBE Awards 2018 in July
- “Awarded T-Level Pilot” – June 2018. Fareham College is one of only 9 colleges in the south-east to be offered the opportunity to deliver the first 3 T-level subjects in 2020.
- Fareham College scoops Teaching Excellence Framework Award in June 2018

Fareham College offers state of the art facilities comprising workshops, teaching classrooms, learning resource centres, restaurants, a theatre, a hair & beauty salon and associated facilities. We operate over a number of sites which are either purpose

built or significantly updated and refurbished following an investment of £34m.

In November 2017, the College received an ‘Outstanding’ judgement in its latest Ofsted inspection, one of only a handful of colleges to have converted to the highest grade in more than two years.

Our success is supported by a team of over 300 academic and business support staff. We work closely with employers to provide the very best technical and professional training to set our students on the path to exciting and rewarding careers.

We are looking for a Principal with proven experience/skills in the following areas:

- Advanced leadership skills - adapting and managing change projects, making difficult decisions whilst still maintaining a motivated team
- Financial acumen to understand key drivers and respond with clear timely and measurable recommendations
- Advanced communication skills and the ability to adapt to different groups, students, employers, politicians, educationalists and Governors

- Student engagement to deliver high quality outcomes and tracking students into employment
- Employer engagement and responding to sector opportunities, including partnering individual organisations and groups of businesses within sectors
- Exploit the reputational opportunities arising from an “outstanding” organisation and deliver growth in student numbers and continually improve quality
- Able to respond effectively in a rapidly changing environment
- Open management style and most importantly a sense of humour - making the experience fun

Interview Dates: 20th & 21st March 2019

Follow us on LinkedIn and view our latest college updates.

For any application queries, please contact Sarah Allen, HR Adviser on 01329 815 394. More information on the position can be found here: www.fareham.ac.uk/college-overview/fareham-college-principal-recruitment/

We are not using agencies to recruit to this position.

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ESP is recruiting.

This is an exciting time to be joining a dynamic and innovative training provider. These new roles provide unique opportunities for ESP to become a world class institution and create and grow our apprenticeship offer.

We are currently recruiting a Programme Delivery Project Officer, looking for a solution focused individual who has experience of designing, developing and shaping the delivery of our apprenticeship programmes.

We are seeking two committed and qualified trainers and learning and skills coaches of Leadership and Management to drive forward our portfolio of Leadership and Management and Human Resource qualifications, including higher apprenticeships to meet the demand for skills development and the expectations of our employers.

With the learner at the heart of all we do, ESP are currently looking for an enthusiastic and driven Compliance and Quality Lead to take a lead role in the development and maintenance of robust controls and procedures with the purpose of ensuring compliance with audit requirements to meet funding and external stake-holder requirements, and contribute to improving the quality of, and compliance with the completion of learner files and accurate data recording.

An excellent opportunity has arisen within ESP for a highly motivated, learner focused, inspirational Work Based Learning and Skills Coach to join our team to deliver outstanding provision to our learners and employers delivering apprenticeship programmes including Customer Service, Team Leading, Business Management and Leadership and Management programmes.

To apply for any of the above positions, please email your CV and covering letter stating how you meet the person specification and why you would be suitable for the role to karen@esp-ac.uk

For more information on each vacancy, please visit <https://bit.ly/2zKXruk>



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The city of Bristol is a hugely creative, vibrant and innovative city. With large numbers of multi-national employers across a range of industries and a significant creative cluster, our College has made real progress in securing the support of employers and key stakeholders in the city.

We are seeking a leader who has the capability to balance the internal and external leadership demands of this post whilst building a culture where all colleagues contribute to improvement and student success. Above all, our new Principal and Chief Executive must subscribe to our values of integrity, respect, ambition and pride, making those central to their work both within the College and across the city.

We have retained the services of FE Associates to support us with this crucial appointment and interested parties are advised to have an initial conversation with our lead advisor, Matt Atkinson. This can be arranged via Samantha Bunn on 01454 617707 or samantha.bunn@fea.co.uk.

For more information visit the FE Associates website: <https://fea.co.uk/jobs>

Closing date: **Noon on Wednesday 13th February 2019**
Interview dates: **Monday 25th and Tuesday 26th February 2019**



To apply, please send your CV to recruitment@wea.org.uk

CLOSING DATE AND TIME

Sun, 10/02/2019 - 23:59



Adult Learning Within Reach

WHO WE ARE

The Workers' Educational Association is a unique charity and the UK's largest voluntary sector provider of adult education. With a clear vision and a strong social purpose, we bring great teaching to local communities, with life-changing courses held in community centres, workplaces, schools and almost anywhere else you can think of. Since 1903, we have been giving disadvantaged people the opportunity to return to learning - inspiring them to realise their full potential and become active, engaged citizens. We see education as a tool for social justice, not just self-improvement, and we pride ourselves on making learning accessible. Volunteers play a central role in everything we do, from governance through to classroom support, helping us deliver courses to 50,000 people in 2,300 locations.

ABOUT THE ROLE

The post holder will promote achievement of education performance indicators in line with the WEA's strategic aspirations and business plan, across the full range of funded provision in the WEA's activity in England. This includes Adult Education budget, Mayoral Combined Authority and a range of contracts and full cost recovery educational activity across the WEA's 4 themes, Employability, Community Engagement, Health and Wellbeing and Culture. This will include supporting education project implementation and delivery across England

ABOUT YOU

You will hold a level 4 teaching qualification and Prince 2 or equivalent project management qualification, with experience of contract management.

You will have previous experience of management of Education and Skills Funding Agency contracts and of management and interpretation of complex data and along with excellent communication and interpersonal skills and ability to build relationships, a high attention to detail and the ability to organise and prioritise your own work.

You should be able to motivate, inspire and inform those around you to achieve the best outputs for the organisation.

SENIOR EDUCATION DELIVERY MANAGER

HOURS

35 hours per week

SALARY

39,161 to 41,221

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The WEA is looking for a Senior Education Delivery Manager to promote education performance achievements in line with our strategic aspirations and business plan.



EDITORIAL



Apprenticeship upturn need not be a predictable shift away from helping those in most need

Last February, when Skills Minister Anne Milton was faced with a 41 percent fall in apprenticeships starts since the levy was introduced, she bravely told me she expected to see an upturn 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."

So it comes as no surprise that Milton has

said she is "thrilled" at the apprenticeship starts figures for the first quarter of 2018/19 (August, September and October), up 15 per cent on the same period last year.

It is still not at pre-levy levels and a long way off being on track to hit the 3 million target, but it is certainly now heading in the right direction.

And like Milton, I've believed employers and providers would take their time to build

momentum and the numbers would recover.

But scratch beneath the celebratory surface and you'll find an uncomfortable truth.

Employers are using their ownership of the system to ignore young people.

First quarter starts have fallen by nearly a quarter since 2015/16 for those under the age of 25 and continue to fall for 16 to 18s since the levy was introduced.

Contrast this with

apprenticeship starts for those aged 25 and over increasing a whopping 14,400 (43 percent) this quarter, when compared to the same period last year.

And when the National Audit Office publishes its findings in the coming months it is expected to join calls from the chief inspector at Ofsted to take back some control from employers.

Milton has said that the first phase of the levy reform was to

get the system up and running and phase two is focused on a longer term strategy.

Shifting demand away from existing employees on management courses to young job entrants should be at the heart of that strategy.

Nick Linford, Editor
news@feweek.co.uk

Readers' reply



EMAIL



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MPs from all sides call for an end to six years of real-term FE funding rate cuts

@MDcityandguilds

Further education has been the 'neglected middle child' for too long ... the pendulum has swung too far in higher education's favour, despite the sector not fulfilling its promises to all those it serves.

@NewCityCol

Thank you to @rushanaraali for giving such a clear message of the £3.3bn cuts in Further Education since 2010, to the parliamentary debate yesterday. A powerful alumni of @towerhamletscoll! #LoveOurColleges

@AoCDavidH

I'm so pleased that the petition was led by students - exercising their democratic rights to have a say and call Parliament to account. Their life chances and millions of other young people need to be taken seriously #LoveOurColleges

Minister 'shocked' by college decision to block access to FE Week

Dave Spart

I propose that some public-spirited person in the area prints a few thousand copies of the articles in question and hands them out at the college gates.

Anon.

The college had plenty of time to explain any inaccuracies in the story and, if they're still not

happy, they can sue. Doesn't make blocking access to *FE Week* anything other than a highly petty move.

New LearnDirect owner wins £20m in ESFA contracts

Steve Holmes

Who needs a good OFSTED, when a Grade 4 is good enough for £20m of new business?!

@marches_skills

The tender asked for local bases and provision - how does a Sheffield-based company become a local provider in London and the Marches - another example of the ESFA only reading what the bid writer has put and not looking at what's actually there (another RoATP problem coming?).

REPLY OF THE WEEK

MPs from all sides call for an end to six years of real-term FE funding rate cuts



Expected more from Robert Halfon than this - FE funding has nothing whatsoever to do with Prince Philip's transport woes.

MPs seem to fall over each other to appear relevant and terribly clever by making these inane links, which have absolutely zero effect on the problem at hand and just waste time - they might just command more respect if they grew up a little.

Geoff

Experts

FIONA ALDRIDGE

Director of Policy and Research,
Learning and Work Institute



The National Retraining Scheme will offer flexible, targeted support

With little fanfare, the National Retraining Scheme is being developed. Research is being done to ensure it will provide advice and opportunities that are attractive and relevant to people's needs, says Fiona Aldridge

Before the current saga of Brexit deals and no-confidence votes, you might recall the Conservatives' 2017 manifesto commitment to "help workers stay in secure jobs as the economy changes by introducing a National Retraining Scheme".

Eighteen months later, we still know very little about the NRS, though a recent parliamentary question confirmed that it will be targeted at adults aged 24+, without a degree, who are in work – with a focus on those in occupations at risk of technological change.

While details of the scheme are sparse, it is being developed. Government departments have been working with each other and other

stakeholders to understand, then meet, the needs of the people and businesses who will use it.

So, what does the evidence from the Department for Education's user research and the cost and outreach pilots, supported and evaluated by the Learning and Work Institute, say about how the NRS should operate?

National: Given the pace and scale of technological and economic change, it is critical that all adults can develop their skills and retrain throughout their lives. This must be a national priority; and central government has a key role to play in leading policy development, setting a national framework and ensuring that such a system is appropriately funded and valued.

However, evidence from the cost and outreach pilots clearly demonstrates that robust local leadership and co-ordination is vital in ensuring effective delivery. A key challenge is to develop a coherent national framework that can be shaped and implemented locally

to meet the needs of local people and businesses.

Retraining: Wide-ranging estimates exist about the number of jobs that will be replaced or changed significantly by technology. However, research shows that few people believe their job is at risk.

"The scheme must be able to flex around people's wider commitments"

Even when this threat hits home, many adults do not seek out information and advice about retraining opportunities – or even know to do this. Those who do try may be unable to find provision that meets their particular needs or that flexes

around their wider commitments. Indeed, user research clearly shows that adults in this position are more concerned with finding a job rather than a training course. Thought is being given as to how the NRS will provide high-quality opportunities for people to develop their skills or retrain without taking them out of the labour market.

Scheme: We already have a plethora of short-term initiatives; there is no appetite for another. Instead, employers have been clear that any new scheme must integrate with existing systems and fit coherently with wider government expectations around their involvement in skills development.

Adults too, particularly those who are traditionally least likely to train, are also unlikely to engage just because there is a new scheme in town. The NRS needs to deploy creative ways of reaching them, and must ensure that the support and training on offer is attractive and relevant to

their needs. Early findings show that, while social media is most effective in communicating a range of messages to the greatest number of people, adults are more likely to take action following face-to-face contact. Officials developing the NRS are having to think creatively about how people's natural contact points can be used to engage them in thinking about retraining, and what sort of offer will best help them to secure good work.

The call for "no more talking, more action instead" is understandable. Indeed, our research shows that participation in adult learning is at a 20-year low, and that those who could benefit most from retraining often have least opportunity to do so. But perhaps the lesson to be learned from other areas of skills policy is that taking time to shape evidence-based policy, rather than rushing out under-developed reforms or chasing big targets, might serve us better in the long run.

FRANK COFFIELD

Emeritus professor of education,
UCL Institute of education



Useful and better than we had, but requires improvement

Frank Coffield steals Ofsted's language to grade last week's new inspection framework

How do FE and Skills (FE&S) fare in the new inspection framework? I've inspected the proposals from the perspective of FE&S and provide formative feedback using Ofsted's grading scale and language.

First, its strengths. The handbook is much shorter than its predecessor, but still runs to 57 pages and is apparently not "exhaustive". The five key judgments will cover: quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; leadership and management; overall effectiveness. Evaluating the quality of education is a major improvement rather than just test and exam results. There's also recognition that changes to inspection should not drive up teacher workload.

I welcome the move to put curriculum back at the framework's heart; colleges will now be judged on

the intent, implementation and impact of the curriculum. Inspectors will draw on five sources of evidence for intent, eight for implementation and five for impact.

Leaders will need to demonstrate that their curriculum is "ambitious", "coherently planned" and contains "content which has been identified as most useful"...but who will decide this? They will also have to convince inspectors that "they have planned the coverage, content, structure and sequencing of the curriculum, and can show that they have implemented it effectively". These are huge burdens, but still more is required. Teachers also must ensure that "content is taught in a logical progression, systematically and explicitly for all learners". What's the logical progression in the teaching of history or hairdressing, biology or business studies? Will Ofsted confirm that all its inspectors will be subject specialists?

During the consultation period

Ofsted needs to answer these questions and explain what it means by "ambitious", "coherent" and "most useful content".

Ofsted remains wedded to its four-point grading scale, but to apply one adjective to a mega FE college with 30,000 students and 30 departments

"This framework will not reduce teacher workload"

is a statistical nonsense because it cannot reflect complexity and variety. Mick Fletcher, of the Policy Consortium, pointed out that large parts of college activity, such as higher education and overseas students, fall outside Ofsted's remit "making a whole college grade even less appropriate". One adjective applied to

any but the smallest specialist college is an absurdity.

Ofsted claims the criteria for its judgments are drawn in part from research, but its overview of research concedes it "is in large part drawn from that done in schools and early years settings". There is indeed little research done in the FE&S sector, but what does exist seems unknown to Ofsted's research department. Instead teachers are regaled with such profound insights as "Pupils are likely to make progress at different rates"; and "when a pupil answers a question incorrectly, the teacher needs to point out swiftly that the answer is wrong". Who knew?

There's also a glaring omission. Data is required on nearly every feature of a college's work except resources. This is a case of the elephant missing from the room. Given the severe, repeated cuts since 2010 to the unit of resource for 16 to 19-year-olds, which have damaged sixth-form and FE colleges, the level

of resource should once again be an essential part of the data collected by inspectors. To its credit (and unlike the DfE), Ofsted has at least acknowledged that sixth forms and colleges have been restricted by the funding cuts, which does beg the question of why it's then omitted it here.

To sum up, the new focus on the curriculum is an advance, but Ofsted needs to explain many of the terms it uses to describe it. It expresses concern about teacher workload, but this framework will not reduce it. Does it avoid crude and stigmatising labels by dropping the grades? No. Is it informed by research on the sector? No. Does it take the unit of resource into account? No. Overall effectiveness? It contains some useful improvements, but requires substantial clarifications, revisions, omissions and additions. After all Ofsted's work, it would be unfair to try to encapsulate its complexity with just one adjective.

RUTH SPARKES

Managing director,
EMPRA



It's time that we learnt to embrace the embarrassing

So the news isn't good. Treat it as a chance to be open about your problems, to value others' points of view and to listen and improve, says Ruth Sparkes

We're all aware that it's a tricky time for FE; the spending review is rolling ever closer, the sector has been financially starved for years, and it's important that sector is able to present itself in the best possible light – but embarrassing news is sadly not in short supply.

I'm not pointing the finger at principals or chief executives or head of departments really. In my 15 or so years' experience of working in PR and corporate affairs in education I have come across all sorts of instances where poor judgment and bad behaviour are swept under the carpet, rather than recognised as an opportunity to come clean and address

problems.

Every sector has its fair share of issues. It doesn't matter whether you're defending the country or running a

“It is self-defeating to see negative opinion as a nuisance”

medical unit, being caught hiding the truth, pumping out excuses or blaming others invariably results in negative headlines.

It is great that the sector has recognised the power of a good reputation by celebrating and promoting external assurance of what it is doing, when it's good or

outstanding. Positive endorsement, whether that's through Ofsted or other external auditors is worthy of wider attention. But when problems arise, particularly if those in positions of responsibility are found to have come up short, it's all too common for the response to be silence, distortion or publicly blaming others for bringing issues into the public domain.

Most of the time such issues don't make the local, national or specialist media. But when the news is bad – when criticisms are voiced in public, negative outcomes are shared in the public interest or legitimate concerns are raised, as they have been in recent months – the reaction is often one of outrage.

The tendency is to “shoot the messenger” of undesirable news, whether that's the media, inspectors, or the commissioners' office. Denial and defensiveness are the first

reactions – “they're taking things out of context”, “they're making mountains out of molehills to increase site visitors” ... “they're spinning a narrative to fit what they want to think”, “stirring up a controversy where there's nothing”, “it's not even a story”.

Even if this were true, it is self-defeating to see negative expert and public opinion as a nuisance and

“Hiding the truth inevitably results in negative headlines”

something to be suppressed. Yes, it is embarrassing to have light shone on our weaknesses. Rather than feeling

threatened, those in authority should recognise the benefit of being open about problems, value others' points of view and value the opportunity to listen and improve.

Professional communications is not just about churning out positive news stories or obfuscating the bad. As a trusted adviser, it is our job to hold up a mirror, examine what is embarrassing and determine an effective resolution. Only then can we move forward in a mature and responsible way.

The current environment makes it ever more important to take care of the public money and young people's futures that are entrusted to the FE sector. There is a real opportunity to step up, be professional and accountable, in delivering quality education and training. If the sector continues to deny where it has problems, undoubtedly, the result will be more critical headlines.

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Delivering the Skills of the Future**

The Studio, 7 Cannon Street Birmingham, B2 5EP

15th May Pre-Conference drinks reception 6pm – 10pm

Bulletin



John Gray

Director of further education, Emsi

Start date January 2019

Previous job

Director of marketing and strategy, Sheffield College

Interesting fact

John is keen cook and loves to bake – egg custard tart is his speciality



Sir Dexter Hutt

Chair, Birmingham Metropolitan College

Start date February 2019

Previous job

Chief executive of Ninestiles Plus, and Hastings Federation of Schools

Interesting fact

Dexter was on the popular ITV gameshow the Krypton Factor in the 80s

Movers & Shakers

...

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



Janice Gormley

Deputy principal, Queen Alexandra College

Start date December 2018

Previous job

Assistant principal, curriculum, Queen Alexandra College

Interesting fact

Jan has done something for charity each year since she was 40 – including the National Three Peaks Challenge within 24 hours!



Paul James

Deputy principal, Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College

Start date January 2019

Previous job

Deputy principal, New College Swindon

Interesting fact

Paul once had dinner with the Prince of Luxembourg in Cambridge

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

FEWEEK

Got a **story**?

Get in touch.

Contact: news@feweek.co.uk
or call 020 81234 778

10TH anniversary
FESTIVAL OF EDUCATION
 Wellington college

WHERE THOSE WHO INSPIRE. FIND THEIR OWN INSPIRATION.

THE 10TH FESTIVAL OF EDUCATION
 20-21 JUNE 2019
 WELLINGTON COLLEGE, CROWTHORNE

THIS YEAR WE WILL CELEBRATE THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FESTIVAL OF EDUCATION, WHICH HAS GROWN FROM A THOUGHT-FORUM TO THE MOST IMPORTANT, INTERESTING AND INSPIRATIONAL EVENT IN THE EDUCATION CALENDAR.

Visit EDUCATIONFEST.CO.UK to book now
 #educationfest



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

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

Solutions: See right

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: Alyson Shields

Solutions

Turn the paper around to check if your answers match - but no cheating!

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

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