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# FEWEEK

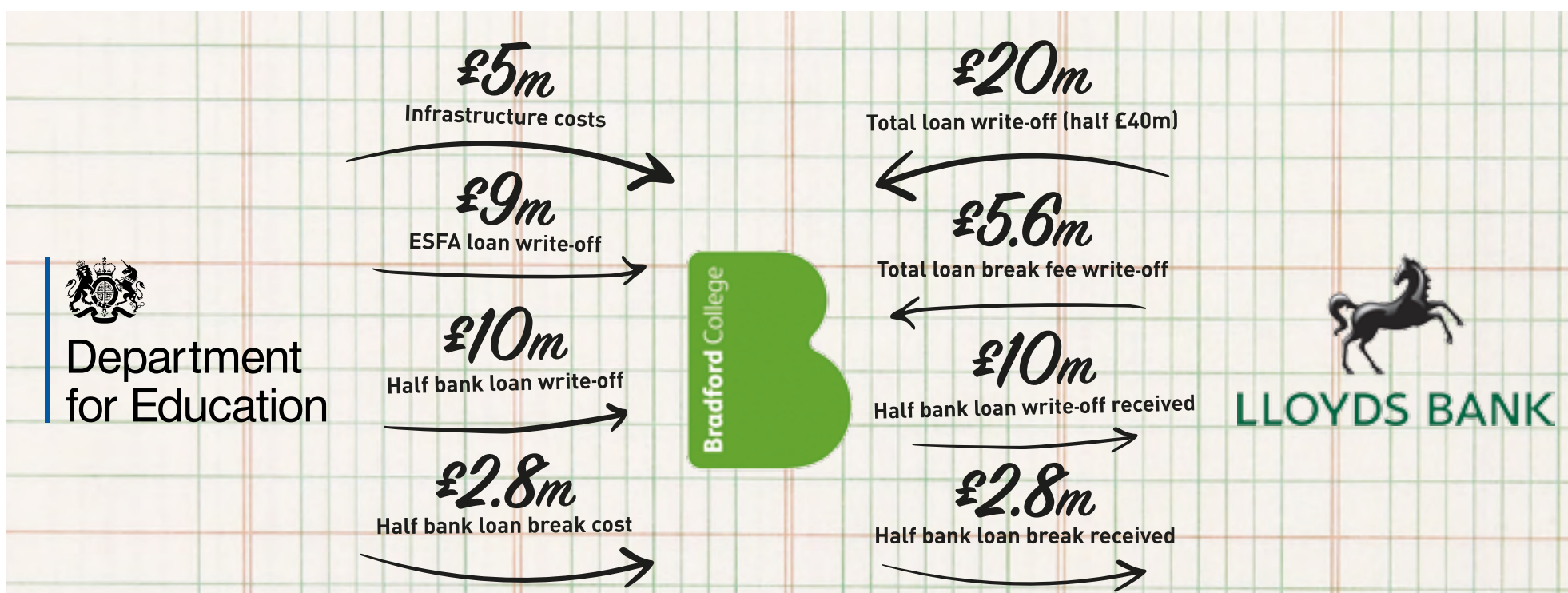
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FRIDAY, JUNE 14, 2019  
EDITION 284

## FUNDING WON IN CONTROVERSIAL TENDER NOT USED

BILLY CAMDEN BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

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## BANK FORCED TO GIFT MILLIONS TO COLLEGE

- > DfE threatened to put Bradford College into insolvency unless Lloyds Bank halved a £40m unsecured loan deemed irresponsible lending
- > Lloyds agreed in return for sharing costs of loan write-off with ESFA
- > College survives but over 130 jobs to be cut to find £3.5m savings

Exclusive

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**Page 20**Making T-levels and A-levels the  
only options of choice - really?  
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# No mega-merger for Cornwall College after securing £30m bailout

**BILLY CAMDEN**

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Cash-strapped Cornwall College Group has secured a £30 million government bailout to drive forward its "fresh start" business plan, but questions continue to loom about whether campuses will be sold off.

The group, which has eight sites across the South West, was told it was not financially "viable or resilient" and had "weak solvency" in its post-16 area review report from 2017, but that it should remain a standalone college.

A follow-up review of further education in Cornwall was launched last year at the request of Cornwall Council, which put pressure on the group to work more closely with its rival, Truro & Penwith College, and that a merger may be in learners' best interests.

The prospect of this mega-merger

now appears dead in the water after Cornwall College Group secured a significant handout from the Education and Skills Funding Agency. Truro & Penwith also told FE Week that it has "no plans for merger".

Cornwall College Group had its initial request for the £30 million bailout rejected by the ESFA in May 2018, after receiving £4.5 million emergency funding in 2016-17 and £3.5 million in 2017-18.

One of the "main concerns" for the agency was around the "viability of maintaining eight sites", according to the FE Commissioner report published three months ago.

The college was "invited to prepare a 'deep dive' contribution model, which would include the ability to look at individual courses delivered at each site", and had a reworked bid accepted at the end of March 2019.

Details of the new financial plan are

not known, but Cornwall College Group's interim chief executive, Dr Elaine McMahon, has said the "elements of the group's estate would be restructured".

A spokesperson for the group said it was unable to comment on its future plans any further when asked if it was preparing to sell off any campuses.

Other big college groups in financial difficulty have downsized in recent times.

In April it was announced that Harrogate College was being offloaded by the Hull College Group as part of its recovery plan.

A month later Birmingham Metropolitan College announced it was to sell off its Stourbridge College site, with learners moving to two other nearby colleges in September.

The last member of the Cornwall College Group to join was Bicton College in March 2015. It is nearly 70 miles away from the main cluster of the group's

## CORNWALL COLLEGE CAMPUSES

- A - Duchy College Rosewarne Campus
- B - Camborne Campus
- C - Falmouth Marine School Falmouth Campus
- D - Newquay Campus
- E - St Austell Campus
- F - The Eden Project
- G - Duchy College Stoke Climsland Campus
- H - Saltash Campus
- I - Dbs Music Plymouth Campus
- J - Bicton College Bicton Campus
- K - Dbs Music (For Diplomas) Bristol Campus



other campuses. Its Bristol site is the furthest away – sitting nearly 100 miles away from Bicton.

In return for receiving the £30 million emergency funding, the college group has committed to significantly changing its operating model – a process known as "fresh start".

Former principal Raoul Humphreys resigned back in November.

An FE commissioner assessment summary of the group, published in July 2017, said the new leadership team was "not responsible for the loss of financial control" experienced by the college under the previous principal Amarjit Basi, who resigned in July 2016 with a £200,000 payout.

McMahon said the group has now "reviewed the entire college curriculum in line with Local Enterprise Partnership priorities, market need, employer requirements and skills needs, and have rigorously tested the quality of each course".

A "modern and secure IT systems infrastructure" will also be implemented and there will be "investment in exceptional training and learning experiences for students and businesses".

A spokesperson for Truro & Penwith College said: "The aim of Truro & Penwith College is to support and complement those external interventions which enable the creation of a financially viable, standalone Cornwall College.

"It is offering support through sharing best practice in the areas of quality, planning, and leadership and governance."

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## News

## IfA to 'optimise' apprenticeship EQA system

FRASER WHIELDON  
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Exclusive

The Institute for Apprenticeships has called for the assistance of the government's exams and HE watchdogs in devising an "optimised" external quality assurance system for apprenticeships.

Sir Gerry Berragan, the institute's chief executive, wrote letters in April to the chief regulator at Ofqual, Sally Collier, and the chief executive of the Office for Students, Nicola Dandridge.

Berragan explained that since January of this year, the IfA has been delivering a "programme of work that will improve the delivery of EQA", which includes a "strengthened operational framework and a digital service, both of which will allow us to better exercise our statutory duty and bring greater consistency".

The letters, obtained by FE Week,

reveal that the IfA has been asked to provide the Department for Education with an "appraisal of the best method of delivering EQA through a simpler system".

"One important part of this is retaining the role of professional bodies (employer groups and professional entities) in the system," Berragan said, adding that he would "value" the views of Collier and Dandridge on how their organisations "might work with professional bodies – either directly or indirectly – under an optimised system".

Despite the institute previously pledging to become more transparent, a sizeable portion of Berragan's letters to Collier and Dandridge were redacted.

Currently, there are 18 EQA bodies which monitor the end-point assessment



Sir Gerry Berragan

organisations (EPAOs) that run examinations for apprentices.

The job is done by a mix of professional bodies, employers and quangos such as the IfA and Ofqual – which between them run EQA for over 200 standards.

Ofqual is the second biggest provider in this space, but the OfS isn't on the EQA register, which raises questions as to why Berragan asked the higher education regulator for its views.

The OfS was approached for comment but did not respond at the time of going to press.

Many in the FE sector have been critical of the current EQA system, complaining that it is too complex.

The IfA's letters hint that Ofqual will, in future, be the lead body for it, something that would be welcomed

by the chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers

Mark Dawe, who said: "Finally, common sense is biting. The sooner this process of transfer is complete, the better.

"It is great to have professional bodies involved across all sectors, but Ofqual should have overarching responsibility."

Collier told the House of Commons education select committee in March that her organisation would like to expand its role in monitoring apprenticeship EPAOs.

She argued her organisation has done a "good job in proving that, as the regulator, we can do this job and can do it well" and they are "ready to take on a larger role", following an October 2018 report by the committee on apprenticeships, which recommended Ofqual should be given total responsibility for EQA.

Collier agreed with committee chair Robert Halfon that it is "unnecessary" to have so many different bodies doing apprenticeship regulation.

The lack of a single EQA body for apprenticeships has contributed to a "ridiculous variability" in the amount



Sally Collier

that is charged EQA, according to Tom Bewick, the chief executive of the Federation of Awarding Bodies, which represents EPAOs.

FE Week revealed in February that EPAOs can be charged between nothing and £179 per apprentice for EQA.

When shown this analysis, Graham Hasting-Evans, group managing director of NOCN, an EPAO, told FE Week he was "very concerned" about the high level of EQA charges, which are "up to 10 per cent of the EPA cost in some cases".

The IfA's new EQA framework is due to go live from July 1.

## DfE pressured bank into writing-off half of college's £40m unsecured loan

BILLY CAMDEN  
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From front

Exclusive

Government officials forced a major bank to halve a £40 million unsecured loan after threatening to put a college into insolvency.

In a highly unusual move, Lloyds Banking Group agreed to slash Bradford College's debt to £20 million in return for halving the write-off costs with the Department for Education.

The details of the last-minute deal, struck at the end of March just before the DfE's "restructuring facility" closed, are secretive and complex but the college has said it is "grateful" to both the department and bank for being kept afloat as it tries to find a further £3.5 million in savings.

Latest accounts for Bradford College, where more than 130 jobs are currently at risk, shows it had a total of £40 million debt, all of which was due to be repaid within one year after it breached one of its banking covenants.

Knowing this repayment deadline could not be met, negotiations began and FE Week understands the ESFA argued that the unsecured loan had

been irresponsible lending on the part of Lloyds and used the threat of insolvency to strike a deal.

Rather than potentially losing the entire £40 million if the college went bust, which is allowed to happen following the launch of the FE insolvency regime in April, Lloyds agreed a financial arrangement with the ESFA's transaction unit.

This meant the college was given £12.8 million by the ESFA to pass on to the bank and the bank gifted an equal amount of £12.8 million to the college, in what they called "debt forgiveness".

These payments resulted in the loan halving to £20 million, repayable over 15 years, and also covered the £5.6 million loan break costs.

In addition, the ESFA also wrote off its own £9 million loan with the college and provided £5 million for infrastructure improvements, making a total payment to the college of £26.8 million, excluding the £12.8 million passed on to the bank.

A financial advisor to the college sector told FE Week they understand the gift by the bank to be the first such significant debt write-off for a college.

When covenants have been broken in the past, banks would typically renegotiate quickly and change the

loan to very high interest rates – knowing the DfE would have to bail the college out if it ran into further trouble.

A spokesperson for Lloyds said a financial arrangement was offered to put the Bradford College on a "stronger financial footing".

"In conjunction with the EFSA, we agreed a refinancing to all parties' satisfaction and which allows the college to move forward with a more confident future," he added.

"This was a standalone transaction and reflected a very specific set of circumstances for Bradford College."

The college's bank loans had been taken out to fund a number of capital projects.

Julian Gravatt, the deputy chief executive of the Association of Colleges, explained that Bradford "missed out on capital funding when that budget was cut in 2009, so they used their own funds and a bank loan to redevelop their campus to meet student needs".

Asked if he thought the insolvency regime might give more colleges a stronger hand when renegotiating loans in the future, Gravatt added: "Any future negotiations between a college and its bank will take place under the shadow of the statutory education administration process. We're finding



Bradford College

out right now how this works.

"There is a bigger point that government has assumed colleges will borrow when allocating capital but has failed to provide adequate revenue funds. Funding colleges properly would avoid the time, effort and money lost in individual financial interventions."

Minutes from a January board meeting stated that current staff costs at Bradford College have increased compared to previous years and now sit at £33.5 million, which "is not sustainable". It is now consulting on cutting 132 jobs.

The college's income for 2019-20 is predicted to fall by £3.5 million for three reasons: its 16-to-18 budget has dropped by £2.5 million, it has lost £800,000 via adult education budget funding in Manchester due to devolution, and has suffered a

£200,000 decline in higher education provision.

The job losses will lead to "significant financial savings and ensure the future sustainability of the college", the Bradford College spokesperson said.

Bradford College went for more than a year without a permanent boss until March 2019, when former Ofsted grade one Barnsley College principal Chris Webb became its chief executive.

The college's last permanent boss, Andy Welsh, resigned at the end of the 2017-18 academic year after the college received both a financial notice to improve and an Ofsted grade three in quick succession.

An FE commissioner report, published in March 2018, revealed that the college's dire financial position had come as a surprise to the governors.

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## News

# Sixth form college retains its grade one after 12-year respite

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A sixth form college in Merseyside has become the first SFC to score a grade one Ofsted rating in nearly two years, during which time three have lost their "outstanding" status.

Carmel College retained its top rating this week, following a respite inspection period of over 12 years.

Mike Hill, the college's principal, said it was a "fitting reward for the hard work of the whole staff at Carmel, both academic and support, who strive to uphold the college mission and ensure the best outcome for every individual student".

It is thought to be the first SFC to retain a grade one rating in 10 years, since Loreto College in Manchester, in 2009.

There are at least two other "outstanding" SFCs that have gone more than a decade without being re-inspected: Hills Road Sixth Form College in Cambridge in 2006, and



Carmel College celebrating their 'outstanding' Ofsted rating

Woodhouse College in north London in 2007.

Grade one providers are not subject to normal routine inspections. They may, however, receive a full inspection if performance declines or if there is another "compelling reason", such as potential safeguarding issues, according to Ofsted's handbook.

The education watchdog has previously come under fire for allowing colleges and schools to go so long

without follow-up inspections.

Since 2017, three "outstanding" SFCs have dropped to grade two.

The last to score a grade one was Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College in Birmingham, which jumped from "good" in December 2017.

In its latest inspection report, Ofsted said Carmel College's governance, leadership and management are "relentless in their pursuit of excellence" and "unswerving in their

aim to provide the highest quality education".

The college's Catholic mission to promote excellence, opportunity, challenge and support for all students in a caring environment infuses the organisation, the report continued.

Ofsted also found swift actions to reduce the proportion of students who leave the college early have been "very effective", and the proportion of students who remain on their courses

has also improved significantly.

The college provides 16-to-19 study programmes, mainly through A-levels. At the time of the inspection, it had 1,761 students.

Ofsted said the "highly committed, skilled and enthusiastic teachers inspire and motivate students to achieve their very best", and students appreciate greatly the "wide-ranging and stimulating strategies" that teachers use to check their understanding.

Since the previous inspection, governors and senior leaders have developed a "vibrant modern campus with excellent facilities for learning", the report added.

Hill said he was "extremely happy with the Ofsted report and proud that we continue to be an outstanding college".

"The commitment and dedication of our fantastic students, who we are blessed to serve, also rightly received considerable praise from the inspectors," he added.

"We hope that Carmel's success can also support and nurture the continued improvement in education across St Helens and help inspire younger students to perform at their very best."

Last year, 98 per cent of its students progressed to university, further education, apprenticeships or employment, according to the college.

# Hinds 'pleased' with level 6+ inspection approach but OfS can't say what it is

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The Office for Students can't say how it will assess level 6 and 7 apprenticeships delivered at non-registered HE providers, even though it's meant to start the work imminently.

As revealed by FE Week last week, the government has opted to give the job to the higher education regulator despite the Augar Review recommending that Ofsted should have the role.

In a letter published on Monday, June 10, education secretary Damian Hinds said he was "pleased" the OfS has "developed an approach to the quality assessment of level 6+ apprenticeships delivered by non-registered providers and that this will be implemented during this academic year".

"This should result in a robust regime that measures high-quality on- and off-the-job training and tackles poor performance," he added.

"You should work closely with Ofsted on this approach, given their responsibilities for assurance of other apprenticeship provision and their experience in this area."

FE Week asked the OfS for details of the assessment "approach" it has developed, such as whether it would be similar to Ofsted inspections, but the OfS could not provide details. A spokesperson would only say: "This only affects a small number of providers that offer higher-level apprenticeships that don't contain either a full bachelor's or master's degree.

"We have committed to starting the first reviews over the summer and will focus on the largest providers first, ensuring that the maximum number of apprentices are captured. We will continue to work closely with Ofsted to benefit from their expertise in inspecting apprenticeship provision."

Hinds' letter said the outcomes of the OfS' quality-assessment reviews should be "transparent" and enable apprentices, employers and the DfE to identify where providers are not

delivering high-quality training.

"This will allow the department to take appropriate action where poor-quality training is being delivered," he added.

The DfE and OfS will review the approach later in the year to "make sure it is effective".

FE Week was first to reveal in November that firms offering higher level apprenticeships without a prescribed HE qualification, such as a degree, had nobody checking their quality of delivery if they weren't on the OfS' register of higher education providers. Ofsted's remit only extends to level 5.

Ofsted chief inspector Amanda Spielman expressed her deep concern at the issue during an interview with FE Week in March, where she said: "I very much hope people will see the logic in us doing it."

The OfS' approach to regulating apprenticeship quality at providers on its register is very different to Ofsted's.

The higher education watchdog employs a "risk-based approach to quality assurance defined by a



Damian Hinds

high-quality threshold for entry and regulates all provision at all providers on the OfS Register," a spokesperson previously told FE Week.

"Providers who are accepted on to the register will have met a high threshold for quality and standards and will be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that quality is maintained."

The Quality Assurance Agency then conducts external annual provider reviews of HE institutions for the OfS, including those that deliver apprenticeships.

But these are not official inspections of the type Ofsted conducts. They do not result in, for example, inspection reports with grades.

# AoC president Steve Frampton faces challenger for the top job

FRASER WHIELDON  
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Exclusive

Never mind the race to become prime minister, the race to elect the next president of the Association of Colleges is where the real drama is happening.

Trafford College Group principal Lesley Davies has challenged incumbent leader Steve Frampton.

Frampton, the former principal of Portsmouth College, is reapplying for the role after having completed one year of his two-year term, under rules introduced after Ian Ashman served the previous maximum one-year term in 2017.

Alison Birkinshaw replaced Ashman, before retiring after one year in office; then Frampton was elected unopposed in May 2018. He is now facing off against Davies in the first test of the new rules.

According to the AoC, the president “acts as ambassador for the organisation and the sector”, helps drive policy formation and maintains

the profile of further education with ministers and external partners.

Every college which is an AoC member will get one vote in the election; which will close next Wednesday. The result is expected to be announced on Thursday, June 20.

Both candidates provided a 200-word manifesto on why they should be elected.

In Davies’ she wrote that her commitment to the education sector has “never been stronger”, adding: “The challenges we face cannot be underestimated and, although our funding is of major concern, it is not just about our finances.

“I would work on your behalf to ensure that government puts the long-term sustainability of colleges at the heart of its policymaking; offering constructive challenge and representing your views to better inform policy development.”

She concluded: “I hope you will consider me a fitting candidate and it would be a privilege to serve as your president.”

Davies has been principal of Trafford College since 2016, during which time

it merged with Stockport College to form the Trafford College Group (TCG) in April 2018.

She confirmed she would stay on as college principal if elected AoC president.

Before becoming principal, Davies was a lecturer, subsequently serving as the AoC’s deputy chief executive and working at Pearson in roles such as vice president of quality, standards and research, and senior vice president of BTEC and apprenticeships.

She was awarded an OBE in the Queen’s 2015 Birthday Honours for her services to education.

She wrote about this “extensive experience” in her manifesto, which also referenced the “productive partnerships” Davies had developed with people in the government.

In his manifesto, Frampton wrote that being the AoC president was a “great privilege” and he was “excited for the task ahead”, working to ensure colleges were in the strongest possible position for the comprehensive spending review this year.

He said that during his year in the role, the association had helped



From left: Lesley Davies and Steve Frampton

to shape the new Ofsted inspection framework, had worked with the DfE on teacher recruitment and retention strategies, and had launched the #LoveOurColleges campaign.

“Together, we’ve achieved two parliamentary debates, had questions raised to the PM, DfE and Treasury, encouraged 70,000 people to sign a student-led petition, achieved 500+ pieces of national and regional press, and had hundreds of MPs writing to

ministers,” he added.

“However, until we get that much-needed financial boost, the fight continues.”

Frampton wrapped up his manifesto by stating: “I am your president and I am passionate about supporting you and the work you do.

“I am proud to represent you, but even prouder to work side-by-side with you, and I hope to continue the work we have started together.”

## College starved of cash shuts award winning training restaurant

JESSICA FINO  
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A college has been forced to shut the doors of its prestigious restaurant, blaming years of government cuts to further education funding.

Lancashire-based Runshaw College announced this week that its award-winning Foxholes Restaurant in Leyland is to close after more than 30 years.

The restaurant functioned as a training centre for chefs and catering students, and its success led Runshaw College to be the first to be awarded the AA College Restaurant of the Year.

Foxholes was also one of few college restaurants to hold industry awards from the Hospitality Guild, Gold Accreditation and the AA Rosette for highly commended cuisine.

The college currently holds an “outstanding” rating but has not received a full Ofsted inspection

since 2008.

A statement released by the college explained the costs of running a training restaurant were “extremely high, so it is with enormous sadness that we will be closing Foxholes due to nine consecutive years of government cuts to FE funding in England”.

Last year, Runshaw College generated a deficit before tax of £2.3 million, compared to £273,000 in 2016-17. However, its income stood at £27.1 million (£27.8 million in 2016-17).

The sharp increase in its deficit was explained by the one-off payment of £1.8 million it made to “buy out its leases commitments” from its campus in Market Street and the sale of its investment property in December 2017.

The college’s board had previously addressed concerns that the buyout could have an adverse impact its accounts.

Minutes from a meeting last year stated that an email had been received



from the ESFA confirming “moderation with regard to the Market Street lease costs should this lead to an inadequate [financial] rating”.

In the same meeting, the college said the income allocation received from the ESFA was less than originally anticipated, and that an

initial assessment had indicated that £330,000 of pay cost savings would need to be made.

Following the decision to close the restaurant, a college spokesperson reassured its students by saying it will be continuing to offer a full-time level 2 chef training course to students aged

16-19 at its Chef School and will also be continuing to train apprentice chefs at “a wide range of restaurants, hotels and other organisations in our local community”.

He added: “We will of course continue to campaign for fairer funding for the FE sector, and members of the public can express their support for this campaign by tweeting, using the #LoveOurColleges hashtag.”

The spokesperson thanked “students and staff for their exceptional skill and dedication, helping Foxholes to be consistently rated as the number one restaurant in Leyland”.

A review posted in the restaurant’s Facebook page a few months ago read: “Local students learning the trade, such quality and talent to be had. I am sure you will see some of them as TV/celebrity chefs one day.”

The restaurant also had a five-star rating and certificate of excellence on Tripadvisor.

## News

# Huge AEB procurement underspend by colleges as all other providers greatly exceed allocations

BILLY CAMDEN  
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Exclusive

Colleges underspent their original funding allocations awarded through the controversial 2017-18 adult education budget (AEB) procurement by a huge 26 per cent, new FE Week analysis has shown.

In stark contrast, all other providers exceeded their initial contracts by 31 per cent.

On top of this, four of the 19 colleges that won in the tender failed to deliver any of their procured AEB funding, and admitted that their non-procured contracts were sufficient to meet demand. Despite this, all four were awarded much larger procured contracts in 2018-19.

The findings will be frustrating for the many private providers who were given much smaller than expected AEB contracts, or denied them altogether, following the tender.

"How much evidence does the government need that the current system of AEB funding is totally discredited and delivering poor value for the local communities that the programme is meant to support?" said Mark Dawe, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers.

"As the latest FE Week analysis once again shows, independent training

## The colleges that failed to spend their procured AEB in 2017/18

College name	AEB 2017/18 procured July allocation	2018/19 procured allocation	Allocation shift	Allocation shift
ABINGDON AND WITNEY COLLEGE	£65,869 (£0 used)	£230,679	£164,810	250%
MIDDLESBROUGH COLLEGE	£129,395 (£0 used)	£416,974	£287,579	222%
SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND STROUD COLLEGE	£79,142 (£0 used)	£263,674	£184,532	233%
ST HELENS COLLEGE	£97,236 (£0 used)	£328,208	£230,972	238%

providers have no problem using up their allocations in full, and when they hear that the Department for Education hands back to the Treasury over £300 million in underspends from various budgets, they get doubly frustrated."

### "Perhaps it's time the NAO took a hard look at what's going on"

Independent providers were told in 2016 their AEB contracts would come to an end in July 2017, rather than being automatically renewed as normal, and they were forced to take part in a procurement process for a pot worth around £110 million.

Colleges did not have to take part in the bidding war, as their contracts were to be automatically renewed, but they were allowed to tender to gain

additional funding.

Nineteen colleges subsequently won £5,071,369 between them.

FE Week's analysis compared figures showing the ESFA's final 2017-18 funding year values with the first contract allocation for November 2017 and their final allocation for June 2018.

By June, their combined final allocation dropped slightly to £5,063,495.

Figures published last week show the colleges actually ended up spending £3,999,962 – which means they missed their year-end allocation by 26 per cent compared to November, and 21 per cent compared to July.

Just four colleges achieved or overspent their year-end allocation.

The DfE said the funding that was not utilised was taken back and then recycled into the next year's allocations budget, which is then distributed

across all AEB providers.

Non-college providers were awarded £81,964,837 between them in November 2017, but their allocations increased to £115,705,143 in July 2018. Final figures show all non-colleges spent £107,609,652 by the end of the academic year, which is 31 per cent up on their original allocation but 7 per cent down on their July figures.

The four colleges to not spend any of their procured contracts in 2017-18 were: Abingdon & Witney, Middlesbrough, South Gloucestershire and Stroud, and St Helens.

A spokesperson for Abingdon & Witney College said: "In 2017-18 our non-procured AEB allocation proved to be sufficient to meet the demands of the local market. However, in 2018-19 we will fully utilise our procured contract."

The DfE extended the contracts it procured for 2017-18 to 2018-19 and maintained funding levels.

However, it said allocations could have increased for several reasons, including: the previous year contracts were only for nine months following delays with procurement, and growth

funding available in 2017-18 was consolidated into the following year.

Abingdon & Witney College was given a £230,679 procured AEB to use in 2018-19 – a 250 per cent increase on the £65,869 available to it in 2017-18 that it failed to spend.

A St Helens College spokesperson said following its merger in December 2017 with Knowsley Community College that it "revisited all business plans and as a result, the additional procured allocation was deemed to be no longer required".

It has been given £328,208 procured AEB for 2018-19.

Zoe Lewis, principal of Middlesbrough College, said when her college bid for procured adult education budget funding

### "The current system of AEB funding is totally discredited"

in 2017-18 that it was in the process of setting up "sector-based work academies to expand our work with unemployed people".

But this took "longer than we'd anticipated and we therefore did not use our allocation last year".

However, Middlesbrough College's new academies are "now established" and it is "on track" to spend its procured contract for 2018-19, which amounts to £416,974, as well as "exceeding our AEB contract delivery by more than 3 per cent".

South Gloucestershire and Stroud College, which has £263,674 procured AEB to use in 2018-19, declined to comment.

The DfE said it was aware of non-delivery issues but would not comment on specific cases. It added that options for future contracting of AEB are being reviewed.

Dawe said giving bigger procured contracts to institutions who didn't deliver on their previous ones "just adds insult to injury".

"Perhaps it's time for the National Audit Office to take a hard look at what's going on here," he added.



Mark Dawe

## The 19 colleges that won procured AEB funding

College name	AEB procured Nov allocation	AEB procured July allocation	Allocation shift	Allocation shift
ABINGDON AND WITNEY COLLEGE	£182,361	£65,869	-£116,492	-64%
MIDDLESBROUGH COLLEGE	£329,825	£129,395	-£200,430	-61%
SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND STROUD COLLEGE	£208,516	£79,142	-£129,374	-62%
ST HELENS COLLEGE	£259,527	£97,236	-£162,291	-63%
YEOVIL COLLEGE	£114,657	£47,905	-£66,752	-58%
UNITED COLLEGES GROUP	£232,377	£217,696	-£14,681	-6%
STRODE COLLEGE	£330,044	£811,838	£481,794	146%
EASTLEIGH COLLEGE	£1,186,808	£1,423,718	£236,910	20%
CITY COLLEGE NOTTINGHAM	£243,841	£315,841	£72,000	30%
BRIDGWATER AND TAUNTON COLLEGE	£375,335	£141,489	-£233,846	-62%
MORLEY COLLEGE LIMITED	£131,174	£164,696	£33,522	26%
DUDLEY COLLEGE	£145,836	£153,985	£8,149	6%
NEWHAM COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION	£200,333	£269,556	£69,223	35%
NORTH EAST SURREY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY (NESCOLT)	£539,595	£488,297	-£51,298	-10%
NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE COLLEGE	£148,513	£113,993	-£34,520	-23%
STOCKTON RIVERSIDE COLLEGE	£146,412	£209,159	£62,747	43%
RICHMOND AND HILLCROFT ADULT AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE	£0	£195,079	£195,079	n/a
SELBY COLLEGE	£102,499	£69,823	-£32,676	-32%
SHEFFIELD COLLEGE, THE	£193,716	£68,778	-£124,938	-64%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£5,071,369</b>	<b>£5,063,495</b>	<b>-£7,874</b>	<b>0%</b>

AEB Procured Funded final	AEB procured Jul v funded	AEB procured Jul v funded
£0	-£65,869	-100%
£0	-£129,395	-100%
£0	-£79,142	-100%
£0	-£97,236	-100%
£5,652	-£42,253	-88%
£129,387	-£88,309	-41%
£510,834	-£301,004	-37%
£1,096,512	-£327,206	-23%
£281,286	-£34,555	-11%
£130,128	-£11,362	-8%
£157,359	-£7,337	-4%
£147,320	-£6,665	-4%
£261,177	-£8,379	-3%
£476,700	-£11,597	-2%
£112,803	-£1,190	-1%
£215,434	£6,275	3%
£201,454	£6,375	3%
£80,286	£10,463	15%
£193,631	£124,853	182%
<b>£3,999,962</b>	<b>-£1,063,533</b>	<b>-21%</b>

Non-College	AEB procured Nov allocation	AEB procured July allocation	Allocation shift	Allocation shift
<b>Non-college Total</b>	<b>£81,964,837</b>	<b>£115,705,143</b>	<b>£33,740,306</b>	<b>41%</b>

AEB Procured Funded final	AEB procured Jul v funded	AEB procured Jul v funded
<b>£107,609,652</b>	<b>-£8,095,491</b>	<b>-7%</b>

Total AEB procured	£87,036,206	£120,768,638	£33,732,432	39%
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Total AEB procured	£111,609,614	-£9,159,024	-8%
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## Feature

# Shedding light on Leeds City Co

JESSICA FINO

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One of the biggest FE providers in the country is going through a momentous upheaval. Leeds City College Group is juggling a major rebrand while taking on another struggling college, as well as the imminent opening of a £60 million state-of-art campus. Jessica Fino headed to Leeds to find out how the group is handling the change

Two months ago it was announced that Harrogate College was being offloaded by the cash-strapped Hull College Group as part of its recovery plan, following years of financial turmoil.

But eyebrows were initially raised when it was revealed that Harrogate would be joining the Luminate Education Group – a name that isn't on the UK Register of Learning Providers, the Education and Skills Funding Agency's allocations data, or Ofsted's inspection database.

It turns out that Luminate is the new name for one of FEs most established providers: Leeds City College Group.

Located in the educational quarter of Leeds, the college's Printworks Campus is a modern and bright building. As I arrive, I enter a big café with sleek décor and freshly prepared cakes and sandwiches. It definitely does not look like your ordinary cafeteria.

I am greeted by a young barista, who

is one of the apprentices working at the café.

Colin Booth is seated at the back of the café waiting for me with a grin on his face. Once we are served with drinks prepared by the apprentice, Booth starts explaining the reasoning behind the group's new name, saying it was needed to represent a "change of direction".

**"Luminate was the only name on the shortlist that wasn't practical"**

"When we were called Leeds City College Group everybody assumed that LCC ran the other organisations, but we are all part of the same family."

The group comprises LCC, Keighley College, Leeds College of Music and the White Rose Academies Trust. From August this year, Harrogate College will also join.

The new name represents a change in how the group manages itself, rather than being a new group, Booth tells me.

He says coming up with a shortlist of names took a "long time of going out and talking to a lot of people externally, as well as to our students and staff".



The construction site of Quarry Hill campus

As well as Luminate, 'Changing Futures Group' and 'Forward North' were two other possible names included in the shortlist.

When it was time to vote, Booth did not know what the board was going to go with, but tells me the results were "quite a surprise".

I am not convinced the name was his first choice, as he points out that it was "the only name on the shortlist that wasn't practical", and he explains that it's more a stakeholder-focused name, rather than student-focused.

The new branding comes at a time



The façade of the new campus

of growth. Once Harrogate joins the group, it will have a total of 30,000 students and over 3,000 staff. The college's budget for next year will be £94 million while the academy trust's budget will be £20 million.

It is creating a new group board, plus individual boards for each institution. The main central services and the executive team, located in Park Lane, in an LCC building, will likely move to a brand new head office within the next five years – although this hasn't been finalised yet.

With all these future plans in sight, is Booth planning on expanding the number of colleges even further?

"We are absolutely fine if anybody wants to join us but we don't have an aggressive strategy to try and recruit other colleges," he says.

"Our growth is mainly the fact that individual members of the group are

growing. We are focused on providing fantastic-quality education and I believe that the consequence is that colleges tend to grow."

**"We are absolutely fine if anybody wants to join us"**

The addition of Harrogate College will by itself be a challenge, since it "desperately needs to grow very quickly when we take that over".

Hull College Group, which Harrogate is still part of, received the



Leeds City College students

# College's rebrand and expansion



Despite not knowing what Harrogate College's full capacity is in terms of student numbers, Booth says "an unscientific walk around the campus suggests to me that it is around half full this year".

**"We don't have an aggressive strategy to recruit other colleges"**

The chief executive adds that Luminate's main problem now is lack of space, a result of the student numbers growing by 11 per cent last year and likely to grow by a similar number next year.

A new £60 million campus at Quarry Hill has been primarily built to improve the group's resources, but since it started to be designed and built three years ago, the group has outgrown its additional space. "So on day one, the building will be at the fullest capacity and beyond."

The college's schools of Creative Arts and Social Science will be relocated to the new campus, as well as facilities and space for Leeds College of Music, which is based nearby.

The project received £33.4 million funding from



Colin Booth, CEO of Luminate Education Group

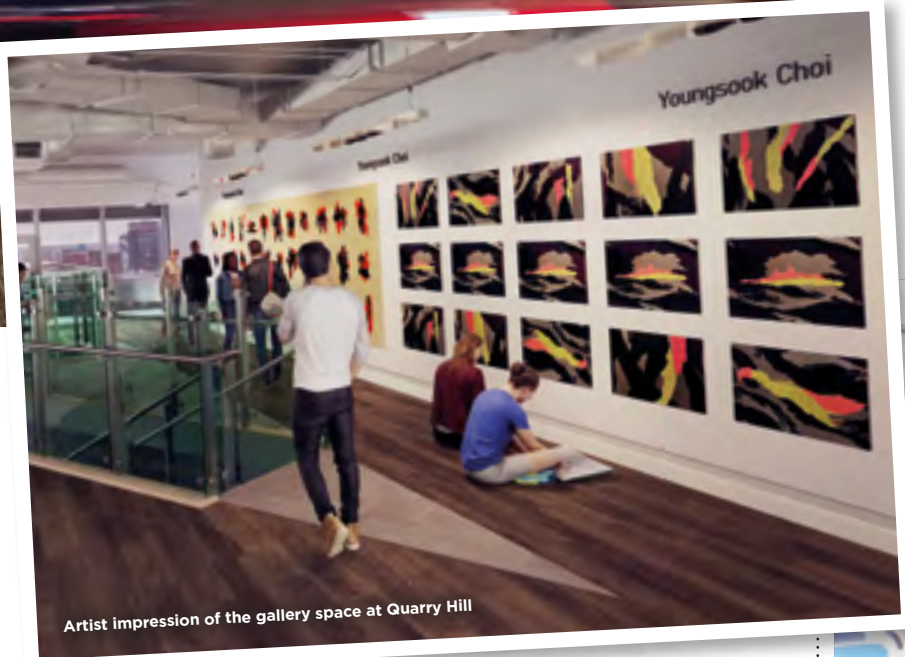
the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership, delivered by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

After wrapping up the interview and finishing off our coffees, I toured Quarry Hill. With one month to completion, more than 100 people were working at the site. Some rooms, including an impressive 200-seat theatre, were very close to completion.

But despite its state-of-art classrooms, recording studios, dance rooms and theatres, the new campus

is not just another new modern building.

The group was also keen to include some details to give character to the building, including an artwork on its façade depicting Jack Longbottom and Mary Brady, two residents of the Quarry Hill Flats in the 1930s. Demolished in 1978, these were the largest and most modern of their kind in Europe, housing around 3,000 people – the same number of students who will be on campus once it opens in a few weeks' time.



Artist impression of the gallery space at Quarry Hill

biggest amount in restructuring grants from the ESFA last year to support its "fresh start" arrangement and to help its "significant financial and operational turnaround".

Booth says: "Actually, a number of people keep asking me, 'If it's struggling that much financially to attract students, why do you want to run it?' As a town of 100,000 people, Harrogate should have an FE college,

and it was heading to a position where it could soon not have one any more.

"They had been losing student numbers in the last three years, contracting in size and not making ends meet financially. The biggest challenge will be to reverse that contraction and help them grow again.

"Our belief was that we can probably make it work. Time will tell if we can, but we believe we can make it work."



Artist impression of students at the college's practical care rooms

Interview

# CHRIS JONES

CEO, City & Guilds

**NICK LINFORD**  
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Last month, education giant City & Guilds raised a few eyebrows by calling for the creation of a new independent body to oversee skills policy in the UK. Not convinced that a new quango is what the sector needs, *FE Week* editor Nick Linford sat down with the organisation's chief executive to see if he could persuade him otherwise. Here's how it went

City & Guilds has a long history, not just in terms of being the most recognisable name in the vocational education space for 140 years.

They have also for many years invested in commissioning research and advising governments around

the world, rarely holding back from presenting potentially unflattering views.

This has continued under their current chief executive, Chris Jones, who since 2008 been at the helm of the group that last year turned over £144 million, employing nearly 1,400 people.

Jones has not shied away from a bit of Department for Education bashing, being regularly critical on social media on whether T-level reform represents value for money to date and most recently "highlighting the urgent need for more considered policy development that is based on substance, not style".

And with reference to the recent level 3 and below qualification consultation, he accused the DfE of "sadly" having "no track record" when

it comes to having "clear outcome measures established at the outset".

One solution to the FE policy failures, Jones told me in a broad-ranging interview, was to establish another quango, to be called the Skills

**“Reviews are applauded, debated, then shelved and forgotten about”**

Policy Institute.

This is not the first time Jones has proposed a new organisation to "hold the government to account by scrutinising skills".

The recommendation featured in the first City & Guilds Sense & Instability report in 2014, and again in the 2016 update. However, the "body with independent oversight" was not given a name and was at that point compared to the Office for Budget Responsibility.

So now, in the third Sense & Instability report we have the proposed name, Skills Policy Institute, and this time the Education Endowment Foundation is used as a comparison – a research organisation established with £120 million of public money.

There had been some disquiet on social media about the idea of another quango – to add to the myriad organisations with oversight of just apprenticeships that featured in the National Audit Office's most recent report into the sector.

Jones has been critical of constant policy change, so he wants to be clear that his idea of a new "quango is not necessarily being designed or considered as a way of saying to driving more change in policy.

"So it's not saying, 'Let's create something that is independent, and more policy for the sake of policy'. It about getting the policy right and making sure the policy that is put in place gets delivered well."

My challenge back to Jones was to ask him: why create another quango with all the associated bureaucracy when the government can instead commission research or high-profile independent reviews, such as Wolf in 2011, Richard in 2012, Sainsbury in 2016 and most recently Augar, as task-and-finish groups?

But Jones dismisses reviews "that can be applauded at the time they are published, much debated, but then

potentially be put on the shelf and forgotten about.

"And I think that, for me, is one of the risks that what we have here is something that typically sees lots of research reports being commissioned with lots of recommendations, but do they all make sense over time? Do they connect with each other? I would argue perhaps not."

Instead, he insists a Skills Policy Institute would build "institutional memories, the basis of what has worked and what has not".

He goes on to say that it could be "quite small. About 10 to 15 people. So it's not substantial. It doesn't have to be. This is not about creating bureaucracy for the sake of it. It's about creating something that has

## Policy Summary

Policy	1	2	3	4	5	6
Train to Gain	◆	■	◆	●	◆	■
Skills Pledge	●	●	◆	●	●	■
The Work Programme	●	●	◆	●	■	●
Advanced Learner Loans	●	●	◆	●	■	●
Apprenticeships Standards/Trailblazers	◆	■	■	●	●	●
T Level Programmes	◆	■	●	●	■	●
National Retraining Scheme	■	●	●	●	●	●

Key

● No evidence found

■ Weak evidence or problematic implementation

◆ Strong evidence

Pilots run  
Design based on pilot findings  
Quantitative targets identified  
Clear success measures embedded  
Evidence of ongoing continuous improvements to the policy/ programme  
Clear evidence of long-term outcomes and/or impact



## “A new Skills Policy Institute would build institutional memories – what has worked and what has not”

substance in what it says and does.”

Intriguingly, before I ask where the money would come from to pay for this new quango, Jones offers up the apprenticeship levy.

“We are talking about something that could be funded with a relatively small proportion of the levy and arguably could be a very good use of a very small proportion of the levy,” he says.

What then follows is a rather critical view of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE), a quango that is in fact funded from levy receipts and has quickly now grown to around 150 staff.

“I don’t see anything yet that is coming out of the IfATE that has been research-led. Looking closely at the specific outcome measures it needs

to be putting in place, it’s filling a slightly different purpose at this moment in time.”

This strikes me as the first time I’ve heard Jones or City & Guilds criticise the relatively new IfATE, and when I point out that they have researchers, he is quick to express a “hope” that they would consider value for money.

“If the IfATE is there to help administer apprenticeship policy, it is essentially a ministry of apprenticeship policy,” he says.

When asked whether the IfATE was meant to be independent, Jones says: “That was the idea. Do we see that coming through? I don’t see enough evidence of that, personally, coming through of this being something that has genuine independence. I haven’t seen them publish a report about the

future of the workplace in 2030 and how the apprenticeship strategy must evolve to support that. Funding has to move from A to B, we need to have these standards... I haven’t seen that.”

### “I think they [the IfATE] should be doing more”

Jones claims he hasn’t given up on the leadership at the IfATE, “I just don’t see what they are doing today as fulfilling the role of what we see in terms of the Skills Policy Institute. They (the IfATE) are administrating policy. If they believe they should be doing more, that’s for them to

determine what they should do. I think they should be doing more,” he adds.

During the course of the interview Jones compared his proposed Skills Policy Institute to the small National Infrastructure Commission and even the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, shut down in 2017 but described by Jones as “forward thinking, beginning to look where some of the potential interventions might need to be over time, thinking where and how employers can begin to shape the policy to a greater extent than they perhaps are at this moment in time”.

My experience was that the UKCES had few fans before being shut, few mourned its passing and it is now rare for it to be mentioned on the FE policy circuit.

So Jones has failed to persuade me that a new quango is part of the solution for avoiding poor policymaking or to stop good policies failing.

No matter how independent a Skills Policy Institute would claim to be, its income and thus survival, along with the actual decision making, would be in the hands of the democratically elected officials.

And frankly, the skills sector is not short of quangos, policy influencers and talking shops, at both a national and regional level.

Put bluntly, moving deckchairs around or adding new ones will not stop the sinking feeling.

What we are really short of is sufficient investment in the delivery of further education and skills.

## News



# Johnson pledges cash for FE as he takes a comfortable lead in leadership contest

**BILLY CAMDEN**  
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Conservative leadership favourite Boris Johnson has said he would “do more to fund our amazing FE colleges” if he won the race to be the country’s next prime minister.

## “Our amazing FE colleges have been too often overlooked”

In a speech launching his bid to be PM on Wednesday, he reiterated his pledge to “end the injustice of the education funding gap in primary and secondary schools”.

Johnson then declared: “Giving young people everywhere the same access, and the same freedoms and the same confidence to succeed, and do more to fund our amazing FE colleges

that have been too often overlooked.

“Because it should be our fundamental purpose as a government to bridge not just the wealth gap, not just the productivity gap, but the opportunities gap between one part of the country and another.”

It was the first time the Conservative leadership frontrunner has mentioned plans for greater investment in FE.

His words were welcomed by the chief executive of the Association of Colleges, David Hughes, who tweeted: “I worked with him when he was Mayor of London and chaired the London Skills & Employment Board. After a shaky start he did learn about why colleges are important and genuinely I think he does #LoveOurColleges. We’ll remind him if needs be.”

But not everyone was convinced that Johnson would back up his words with actions.

“Where’s he getting the money from? It isn’t from income tax and we’ll have a big bill to pay if we leave the EU ASAP as he is intent on doing. I’m not

sure investment in anything is possible in conjunction with his other “policies”. Nice sentiment, though. Yours, a cynic,” tweeted Zac Aldridge, vice principal at Derwentside College.

Meanwhile, Tim Buchanan, apprenticeship vendor manager at GlaxoSmithKline, said: “It’s Boris, it’s a lie.”

Johnson’s commitment comes after the high-profile post-18 education report by Dr Philip Augar said that poor funding in FE “has to be addressed”.

The report’s recommendations included an increase in the funding base rate for 16-to-19-year-olds and a £1

## “Genuinely I think he does #LoveOurColleges”

billion capital investment in colleges.

The base rate funding per 16-to-18-year-old students has been stuck at £4,000 per year for the past five years. Campaigns, including Raise the Rate,



which is led by the Sixth Form Colleges Association, are calling for this to be increased to £4,760.

The Association of Colleges has meanwhile said the rate should be upped to £5,000.

Britain’s new prime minister will be elected in the week starting Monday, July 22.

Results from the first ballot of Conservative MPs, released on Thursday, showed Johnson well in the

lead with 114 votes, followed by Jeremy Hunt in second place with 43 votes, and Michael Gove in third with 37 votes.

Andrea Leadsom, Mark Harper and Esther McVey were eliminated from the race after scoring fewer than 17 votes.

At the time of going to press, Johnson was favourite to become the next prime minister at odds of 1/5, according to betting company William Hill. Second favourite was Jeremy Hunt at 13/2, while Rory Stewart was third at 14/1.

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**Selection process including interviews: week commencing 8 July 2019.**

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For further information and to apply please visit: [www.protocol.co.uk/saudi-arabia-teaching](http://www.protocol.co.uk/saudi-arabia-teaching)



# Adult Education Budget - Programme Manager



## Salary and days of work

This is a full time position paid at £45000

We offer 22 days holiday plus 8 bank holidays (30 in total)

The start date will be in August 2019 - exact date is open to discussion

Big Creative Training is a well-established and expanding creative industry training provider with a long track record of delivering positive outcomes for learners. Our mission is to improve the lives of young people through high quality training and creative industry experiences.

We have more than 400 young people per year going through our vocational training programmes including apprenticeships, and they all take qualifications in maths and English. We have great industry links and work with over 100 creative sector employers and SMEs.

We have recently been successful in our bid for adult education contract in London and we are therefore now looking for an outstanding Adult Education Budget (AEB) programme manager to join our team based in Walthamstow, East London.

You will need to have a strong understanding of the adult education budget and skills policy and funding. You are likely to have experience of operational or strategic delivery of adult education from either a college, provider or agency perspective. Equally you will understand how investment in skills can deliver local and regional ambitions.

This is an exciting opportunity to build a new area of provision from the ground up, within a successful and supportive framework. Candidates will have maths and English at GCSE grade "C" or above, and will be educated to degree level with evidence of outstanding practice working in a similar environment.

### Key tasks

- Work in a way that promotes the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- Champion the organisational values of respect, resilience, integrity, independence and kindness
- Lead on BCT's AEB programme including developing the new models for delivery
- Effectively manage and monitor impact and performance delivery to the outstanding standards required by BCT and the funding agencies and Ofsted underpinned by clear and accurate reporting
- Ensure that contracts and programmes are operated profitably and achieve volume and financial targets
- Provide strong leadership, support and guidance to ensure that staff are enthusiastic, have high expectations, and support learner progress in delivering their employment and vocational skills

- Responsibility for the performance management of AEB subcontracted provision. To include programme support and guidance, performance, financial and volume targets, quality and audit compliance
- Identify emerging trends, developments and research that are relevant to the programme and ensure that delivery is at the cutting edge of best practice
- Develop strong working relationships with funding agencies and regional / national networks of organisations delivering AEB

### Desired qualities

- Passionate about the opportunities afforded by the AEB to positively influence the lives of our learners
- A positive role model who leads by example and models the organisational values in their everyday life and work
- Confident and assertive with excellent leadership skills
- Ability to inspire, challenge and lead staff and learners
- Great team player and able to work on own initiative as required
- Able to relate to, and develop relationships with, staff and learners
- A common sense approach and a range of life experiences
- Experience of working in the creative industries is desired but not essential
- Extremely organised and able to manage own work load effectively
- Highly motivated and driven to succeed in a rewarding environment

### Benefits of working for BCT

- Company pension and healthcare cashback scheme
- Supportive and developmental environment with an innovative approach to education
- Be part of a successful and expanding organisation

### Salary and days of work

- This is a full time position paid at £45000
- We offer 22 days holiday plus 8 bank holidays (30 in total)
- The start date will be in August 2019 - exact date is open to discussion

### How to apply

For an informal conversation about the role please call Alexis Michaelides on **07770 601142**

If you wish to apply you must complete the application form here by 5pm on 28th June <http://www.bigcreative.education/bct-staff-application-form/>

To find out more about BCT and our approach to education please see [www.bigcreative.education](http://www.bigcreative.education)

Big Creative Training was rated "good" by Ofsted in 2017. You can read the full report here: <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/33/51619>

*"Leaders and staff successfully ignite young people's enthusiasm for learning" (Ofsted)*

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## EDITORIAL



## Banks power diminished with insolvency threats – but a short-term gain for long-term pain?

Despite the lack of media attention, the government's introduction of the college insolvency regime now being tested on Hadlow College is, as I've previously described, a watershed moment.

What some well-placed people have since told me is that they agree the government can't guarantee colleges survive with never-ending bailouts, but they fear the unknowns.

Once the insolvency law kicks-in and the accountants literally take charge, will communities lose assets and access to courses for future generations?

Another significant unknown is how the banks will respond, or specifically Lloyds and Barclays, who account for the

majority of long-term loans.

In the last decade many colleges took out multi-million pound loans with the two banks to help finance ambitious construction schemes.

The lending terms included strict rules known as covenants, such as maintaining sufficient cash reserves, rules which many have since broken.

This has left colleges forced to accept higher interest rates with other unfavourable terms.

Others, like Stoke-on-Trent College, persuaded the government that it would save public money in the long-term by using the Treasury restructuring funds to simply pay the £9 million loan back plus close to £2 million in loan break costs.

But as reported in *FE Week*, the balance of power seems to have now shifted away from the banks with the introduction of the insolvency regime.

In what appears to be a case of irresponsible lending, Lloyds gave Bradford College a whopping £40 million in several unsecured loans.

Presumably, by the time the loans had all been drawn-down in 2014, both the college principal and bank executive assumed the government would ultimately step in if there was any risk to the repayments.

That all changed with the introduction of the insolvency regime earlier in the year.

When the college broke the loan covenant the DfE did

not waste the opportunity to remind the bank they might now lose their entire £40 million in an insolvency scenario, because it was an unsecured loan.

In the event, a complex deal was agreed in the days before the introduction of the insolvency regime.

The bank gifted £10 million by writing it off from the £40 million loan and the DfE used restructuring funds to reduce the debt by a further £10 million. They also agreed to split the £5.6 million loan break costs.

In the short-term, the threat of insolvency will, as it has already been proven with Bradford College, weaken the banks negotiating position.

But longer-term it could

cause colleges bigger problems when they are renegotiating loans, mortgages or are in the market for investment funds.

In addition to higher interest rate payments banks will want more security over the college properties for their loans.

And next time the bank might choose not to gift funds and instead take their chances as a creditor of failed college.

So, the next couple of years will prove to be a financial minefield for colleges, not just in terms of government investment, but how banks respond to a shift in the strength of their negotiating position.

**Nick Linford, Editor**  
news@feweek.co.uk

## Readers' reply



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### FE Week wins loan law battle

PM frontrunner pledges greater investment in 'our amazing FE colleges' Bravo. That's music to my ears. It would be nice to hear all of the candidates make a similar pledge.

Chris Todd

### Four-letter verdict on colossal European Social Fund blunder

I'm with the ESFA on this one. I manage compliance on ESF projects and I haven't let any claim go through on regulated learning without a registration from the awarding body. It is clear in the deliverables that this is the evidence for a start.

We've had to do the 100 per cent check and ours are all fine. Timesheets aren't mentioned as evidence for a start on reg, in fact IMO timesheets aren't

needed as registration to awarding body should be used for a start and certificate for the completion.

Before registering them as that is a cost, but ESF is different because you get an amount of money to start a learner on regulated learning and that money is there to use to register the learner with the awarding body. Quite straightforward really.

Education Dan

### Speedy Ofsted criticism of provider just months after multi-million pound purchase

So Geason were allowed to take on 238 3AAA apprentices, despite having never been inspected by Ofsted, then sold them off a month later to Speedy Tool Hire for £26m!!! And the ESFA just let them do it? Then, only six months later, it emerges that over 1,000 Geason

learners receive a poor standard of training and have insufficient off-the-job training. Wowzers. Hope Speedy kept the receipt.

Terry Bentley

Another rogue provider doing exactly as they like and still going strong recruiting apprentices and key staff alike.

There needs to be severe consequences for providers such as this but I fear that without harsh penalties, this won't be the last.

Michael Chambers

### Over 1,300 apprentices left without any provider, 7 months after 3aaa collapse

Well that explains why the 30/40 odd apprentices the ESFA tried to transfer to The JGA Group went to Geason instead

Richard Goodwin

## REPLY OF THE WEEK

### FE Week wins loan law battle



This is really important correction to a situation that should never have been allowed to happen. Well done @FEWeek for the campaigning.

Dr Fiona Summers

## Experts

PROFESSOR  
EWART KEEP

Director of SKOPE,  
Oxford University



## On-the-job T-level placements: how we can avoid a high-vis failure

**If there are not enough willing employers capable of designing and delivering good-quality work placements, T-levels may prove to be an expensive, very public flop, warns Ewart Keep**

Everyone knew from the outset that T-level work placements would be a major challenge for the new courses that kick in this September, and delivering them will be a central test of the initial pilots.

It's why the design of the placements has been evolving since the new qualifications were first announced in 2017. Tweaks already made at the drawing board are reflections of hard reality dawning: the decision to allow a student's placement to be broken down into chunks rather than delivered as one single continuous block, for example; similarly, the switch to allowing a placement to be spread across different employers rather than hosted by just one.

Despite this, it is far from clear at present that enough places can be provided beyond the pilot phase. If a sufficient volume of employers willing to offer the placements cannot be found, and if there are not enough willing employers capable of designing, supervising and delivering high-quality work placements, then T-levels may prove to be an expensive and very visible failure.

### “Building employer workplace training capacity will be key”

A central problem is the capacity of firms large and small to design high-quality work placements that complement and enhance the learning students do in the classroom. To achieve this would require the firm to have a manager capable of liaising with the college to ensure that the integration of curriculum and learning outcomes is carefully orchestrated across these two learning environments.

They should be supported by skilled in-company trainers who could design work processes and tasks that can support structured learning and reflection and monitor and oversee that learning process.

These requirements would not be too onerous

in countries like Germany, where well-established apprenticeship systems are in place that require firms to have significant expertise in melding together on- and off-the-job learning, and appropriately qualified in-company trainers. In England, by contrast, this may be a rather big ask.

When even large employers, such as Jaguar Land Rover, contract out their apprenticeship provision, then the chances that small and medium-sized employers (SMEs) will be able to cope with on-the-job training may be slender.

A pilot project run in 2017-2018 by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development for the JP Morgan Foundation to provide SMEs with free human resource management advice to get them ready to take on young apprentices demonstrated the problems. Most of the resources were spent on getting them to become legally compliant because it turned out that many companies were operating in breach of basic employment legislation.

A separate pilot project undertaken in 2017-2018 by the Institute of Education's Centre for Post-14 Education and Work (again funded by JP Morgan) reinforced the scale of the problem: the East London Vocational Education and Training (ELVET) project found that many employers in sectors such as digital and creative struggled to cope with offering work placements. Many workers were self-employed and coalesced around one-off projects, firms lacked expertise on learning design, and there were practical problems with safeguarding and insurance. The further education colleges involved in ELVET had to expend considerable time and effort building employer capacity to manage work placements.

Some in government believe that colleges can do the employers' job for them and in effect supervise the placement – an unlikely prospect. Those external to the workplace will struggle to deliver good on-the-job learning if there is no on-site expertise.

What is to be done? Building employer workplace training capacity will be key. Getting groups of firms, particularly SMEs, to work together and to build shared capacity is one potential route to success. Another is reviving a national, publicly-funded training of trainers programme which was around in the 1970s and early 1980s and was highly regarded. It would also help with apprenticeship quality.

MARTIN  
VINCENT

Head of education at  
law firm Weightmans



## The FE sector needs to prepare itself for what parity with HE will actually involve

**Further education will need to contend with scrutiny from the Office for Students to access funding prescribed by the Augar review, says Martin Vincent**

The Augar Review's recommendations have the potential to address deep-seated imbalances in post-18 education and put colleges on more equal footing with universities, both in terms of prestige and funding. However, now we've had time to digest the report in full, the further education sector must quickly realise what this parity would mean in practice.

Philip Augar has recommended that the Office for Students (OfS) should become the national regulator for non-apprenticeship education provision at levels 4 and above, and establish a working group with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to develop new regulation that covers this extended remit. Whatever the outcome, this means the OfS will be significantly more involved in further education. This will come with a layer of scrutiny that colleges and other vocational training providers are unfamiliar with and, arguably, unprepared for.

The most significant impact of this change will be in relation to funding. How new revenue streams for FE would be structured is only hinted at in Augar's report. As an overview, it recommends that an additional £3 billion should be made available to FE annually, in addition to a £1 billion capital investment from the government in a newly formed national network of colleges.

Two specific measures it does recommend are free level 2 and 3 qualifications for everyone over the age of 18 and a drop in the tuition fee cap from £9,000 to £7,500, which will impact the growing number of colleges offering validated degree programmes.

We can expect that a system that is more dependent on teaching grants from the OfS will emerge to bridge the funding gap left by a reduction in student contributions. This means FE could be reliant on the OfS and subject to all of the accompanying regulation this brings for the first time – a radical departure for colleges.

Currently, the most significant regulations the sector must adhere to are the statutory provisions of The Higher and Further Education Act and the financial probity conditions and performance guidelines set by the ESFA. FE

funding is not currently dependent on areas such as teaching excellence and student experience.

### “The most significant impact will be in relation to funding”

This would change if the Augar Review's recommendations are fully enacted. Teaching grants from the OfS are linked to the body's Teaching Excellence Framework and league tables that certify institutions as gold, silver or bronze depending on performance. The system is designed to increase competition and deliver value for money to students, but if colleges are not up to scratch, the funding could potentially be reduced or cut altogether.

Colleges would also have to officially register with the OfS to be eligible for grants. The Augar Review recommends that colleges are given protected titles to increase their standing at a national level. Achieving this status will inevitably come with conditions. For universities, the status of Registered Provider carries with it responsibilities, rules and standards covering everything from student welfare and education delivery, to engagement with the community. If an institution breaches any of these requirements, the OfS can launch investigations, levy financial penalties and, in extreme cases, remove teaching licences altogether. Colleges can expect a similar framework to be introduced and would be wise to start reviewing the steps that universities have taken to comply.

Beyond this, colleges that offer validated degree programmes will need to understand how their relationships with universities could change if HE and FE are both subject to OfS regulations. If, for example, a college's OfS classification drops from gold to bronze, a university that validates degrees for that institution may review the arrangement to protect its reputation.

The Augar review recommendations still need to be transposed into legislation, but it is likely to usher in changes that improve FE's position. To take advantage, colleges and training providers need to understand and prepare for a corresponding step change in what is required of them in terms of regulation and compliance.

Don't force young people to choose solely between A and T level, argues Bill Watkin. Instead, let's understand that T-levels and AGQs co-exist, serving different purposes for different people

## BILL WATKINS

Chief executive,  
Sixth Form Colleges Association



# Making T-levels and A-levels the only options of choice - really?

The arguments in favour of Applied General Qualifications (AGQs) are well rehearsed. They offer an alternative academic route to higher education, a closer relationship between classroom study and the workplace, and an opportunity for skills acquisition. I have yet to hear a single teacher or student in schools and colleges say that AGQs should be discontinued.

It is one thing to seek to rationalise a complex landscape of thousands of vocational qualifications; it is quite another to consider removing an entire post-16 pathway to clear the way for the introduction of T-Levels.

To do so would be to fail to appreciate that when young people are faced with a choice between T-level and A-level they are not going to choose the former just because AGQs are no longer available.

What will students choose, if not AGQs, if they don't know at 16 what occupation they want to pursue?; if they don't want to do a single-subject programme of study, or a 900-hour programme?; if the pathway that interests them isn't offered in their local college, or if there aren't enough local employers?

This is not to say we don't need T-levels. The benefits of a more streamlined suite of qualifications and a less acute skills gap are undeniable, but we should have both T-levels and AGQs.

For any government to consider doing away with AGQs would show a lack of understanding and

awareness of their importance to young people, their employment prospects and the country's economy. So what needs to happen following the consultation?

- We need reassurance from ministers that AGQs are here for the long term. The switch from the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) to the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) does need to happen but there are time, workload and resource implications.

- Advocates of T-levels need to stop repeating the line that AGQ students are less likely to finish university, since this doesn't consider factors such as the lower prior attainment and greater socio-economic disadvantage of many AGQ

students.

- Set aside the language of gold-standard qualifications. AGQs should not be thought of as second-class. We should recognise their contribution in delivering skills valued by employers.
- Keep AGQs for those who, at 16, haven't decided on a particular career pathway; AGQs are less occupation-specific, more general, and keep more options open.
- Provide for the 20 per cent of students who currently drop at least one A-level and who currently may take up an AGQ to replace it.
- If the ambition is to reduce the number of level 3 vocational qualifications, let's start with

those that have had no enrolment in the past two years, but let's distinguish between "no enrolment" and "little enrolment". For example, there may be only 12 cabinet-makers on a course at Chichester College, but it is still valuable and should be preserved.

## "AGQs keep more career options open than T-levels"

an opportunity to study a level 3 vocational course in a subject area that interests and inspires them, regardless of the local employment landscape. Otherwise, we may increase the skills gap, not reduce it. Also prospects of social mobility will suffer.

- Protect AGQs for those students who are suited to level 3 study but who do not pass GCSE English and/or maths. If English and maths level 2 is set as a condition of passing a T-level, many providers will make this a condition of entry and render many ineligible for T-levels, leaving A-levels (or NEET) as the only options.
- Let T-levels and AGQs co-exist, as they serve different purposes for different people. Possible exceptions include extended diplomas (3 A-level equivalent) not being offered alongside an overlapping T-level; and a single institution not offering both qualifications where there is a clear overlap in content.

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## Bulletin

# Movers & Shakers

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



**Meri Huws**

Trustee, Vocational Training Charitable Trust

Start date April 2019

**Previous job**

Welsh Language Commissioner

**Interesting fact**

Welsh is her first language



**Jayne Lewis-Orr**

Trustee, Vocational Training Charitable Trust

Start date February 2019

**Concurrent job**

Executive director, M Squared Media

**Interesting fact**

One of her hobbies is rally driving



**Ben Blackledge**

Deputy chief executive, WorldSkills UK

Start date June 2019

**Previous job**

Director of education and skills competitions, WorldSkills UK

**Interesting fact**

He plays for a local football team

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](mailto:news@feweek.co.uk)

## FEWEEK

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# PREPARE FOR CHANGE

**In March 2019, the Department for Education (DfE) announced funding changes in England, which affect some vocational qualifications offered by all exam boards and are part of larger review of post-16 qualifications.**

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**ROB NITSCH**  
 Chief Operating Officer, IFATE



**JULES PIPE CBE**  
 London's deputy mayor for planning, regeneration and skills



**KEITH SMITH**  
 ESFA director of apprenticeships

FURTHER SPEAKERS INCLUDE:  
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## FE Week Sudoku challenge

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

Solutions: See right

## Spot the difference To WIN an FE Week mug



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Last Edition's winner: Ken Fisher

## Solutions

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

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