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# FEWEEK

FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2019  
EDITION 286



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## PRINCIPAL TARGETED IN SOPHISTICATED HACK



Exclusive FRASER WHIELDON FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK

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## MILTON: WAGE CAP 'PALATABLE'

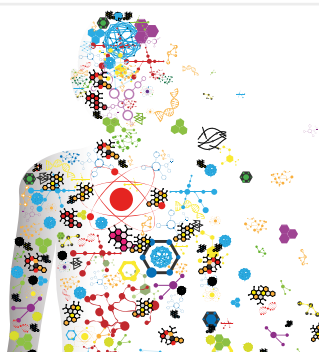
- › Minister considers 'pre-apprenticeship salary limit' to ease budget pressure
- › Civil servants modelling options to restrict access ahead of spending review
- › Former adviser: cap would 'inevitably cut off many higher-level apprens'

BILLY CAMDEN BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

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**Nick Linford**  
EDITOR  
@NICKLINFORD  
NICK@LSECT.COM



**Shane Mann**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR  
@SHANERMANN  
SHANE@LSECT.COM

Please inform the FE Week editor of any errors or issues of concern regarding this publication.



**Billy Camden**  
CHIEF REPORTER  
@BILLYCAMDEN  
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK



**Jessica Fino**  
SENIOR REPORTER  
@JESSFINO  
JESSICA.FINO@FEWEEK.CO.UK



**Fraser Whieldon**  
REPORTER  
@FRASERWHIELDON  
FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK



**Simon Kay**  
DESIGNER  
SIMON@FEWEEK.CO.UK

THE TEAM

INTERIM COMMISSIONING EDITOR

Helene Mulholland  
Nicky Phillips  
Simon Kay

FINANCIALS

SALES TEAM LEADER  
ADMINISTRATION  
PA TO MANAGING DIRECTOR

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HEAD DESIGNER  
DESIGNER

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Learning & Skills Events, Consultancy and Training Ltd

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# College run by famous private hospital in the dock over 'serious' safety issues

FRASER WHIELDON  
FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK

A specialist college, run by a famous private hospital which has treated the likes of Kate Moss and Robbie Williams, has sacked leaders after Ofsted found damning safeguarding issues and gave it not one, but two "inadequate" grades.

This week, the education watchdog has published reports into the residential and educational provision at Priory College Swindon, which caters for people with social and communication difficulties.

Inspections were conducted at short notice, after concerns were raised about student safety.

Its multi-million-pound parent company, the Priory Group, has helped famous faces including Kate Moss, Pete Doherty, Ronnie Wood, Eric Clapton, footballer Paul Gascoigne and comedian Caroline Aherne.

However, its college learners have

not experienced star-studded provision, after the college was downgraded from grade two to four for both its educational provision to 37 learners, and its residential provision to 13 learners, including some under the age of 18.

Inspectors reported that "serious and widespread failures at the college mean young people are not protected and their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded".

They found "significant shortfalls" in leadership and management in the residential provision, and that governance of the educational provision was "ineffective" because governors did not obtain findings from monitoring activities.

The college has insufficient staffing and resources, after inspectors discovered there was a lack of available tutors, art students were having to make do without sinks, and students faced difficulty setting up email accounts and using the web to look for jobs, due to

restricted internet access.

The lack of tutors and internet access issues had led to a learner going missing from the residential accommodation.

Ofsted said that when a learner goes missing, the incident is not tracked or monitored well, they are not spoken to about it when they come back, and information is not shared with placing authorities – which organise accommodation for vulnerable people.

"Too many students are put at risk," the report into educational provision found, while the residential report quoted learners saying they "do not feel safe living at this college, and feel unable to talk to staff about their concerns".

The potential risks presented by adult learners living with under-

18s were not routinely assessed by managers, and both they and leaders do not consider effectively the physically aggressive behaviour of some learners.

Consequently, there was an altercation in which a learner sustained a minor injury, but staff recorded neither the incident, nor the injury.

There was also no record of when a learner was restrained by staff, which is contrary to requirements; nor was there any records on self-harm, online safety or bullying.

"Leadership and management are inadequate because of the failure to prioritise the safety and welfare of students," inspectors wrote.

Leaders do not even meet with complainants face-to-face, and those complaints are not responded to within timescales, so one from 2017 had yet to be resolved at the time of inspection.

Ofsted has recommended the college ensure that it has an effective written policy to promote good behaviour among residential learners; and that a written risk assessment is drawn up to ensure the welfare of learners is safeguarded.

A Priory College Swindon spokesperson said they are undertaking a comprehensive review of the services, and new leaders had been appointed to improve student safety while a longer-term plan is finalised.

"We are also consulting with stakeholders about how best to provide the services in the future," the spokesperson added.

Kate Moss



Paul Gascoigne

## Don't use bid writers, apprentice register re-applicants warned

BILLY CAMDEN  
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

A senior policy advisor from the Department for Education has warned providers against using external bid writers to apply for a place on the refreshed apprenticeships register.

Sheila Sturgeon, who marks many of the submissions, has also urged applicants to not "nick" policies from other providers and claim it is their own while forgetting to change the name and branding – as some hopefuls have done.

The register of apprenticeship training providers finally reopened in December, following a year-long review with more "stringent and challenging entry requirements".

In addition to the new applicants, all 2,500 colleges, training providers and employers already on the register will be invited to reapply at some point this year.

Sturgeon, a civil servant working in the apprenticeships department of the DfE, talked through the dos and don'ts for applicants during a workshop at

the Association of Employment and Learning Providers national conference this week.

She would not be drawn on the success rate of reapplications from established providers, but said the RoATP guidance is "quite specific" and "I don't see how anyone can fail" if the provider is "of the appropriate quality and has been trading for 12 months and has all the policies in place".

But she did state that her "personal" opinion was that the application was more likely to fail if it was not written internally and a bid writer was brought in "to write it for you".

When the old RoATP was running, during 2017, FE Week revealed how consultants were raking in thousands of pounds writing bids for training providers desperate to make it on to the new register at the second time of asking.

Sally-Ann Baker, managing director of London-based Bidright UK, said at the time she found it "incredible" how many "silly mistakes" providers had made with applications.

Her company had been approached



Sheila Sturgeon

by 25 to 30 providers on RoATP and took on 12 cases, all of which were successful. Bidright's fixed rate is £2,000 plus VAT.

But Sturgeon cautioned providers against this, explaining: "The reason I say that is because we ask for specific examples. You need to tell us how your provider has made this policy real and live. It is really important that you find a good example and you use it, because that is probably where providers who aren't as on the ball are likely to fail."

The policy advisor said one shocking finding in some was providers "not having a particular policy, nicking one

from somewhere else and forgetting to change the provider name".

"I cannot count the number of those we have seen, and I am not joking," she added.

The first organisations to be added to the government's refreshed apprenticeship provider register were revealed the day after Sturgeon's presentation.

It showed that 23 new firms have been enlisted – a smaller than expected number and strangely, all of them are only "supporting providers".

An ESFA spokesperson explained

that supporting providers are the "first portion of providers who have been added" to the register and new "main and employer providers will be added in due course".

FE Week asked the Education and Skills Funding Agency when successful "main" applicants will be added, but it did not respond at the time of going to press.

The 23 are the first providers to be added to RoATP since October 2018.

FE Week reported last month that new applicants trying to get on to the strengthened register had been left hanging by the government six months after its launch.

The ESFA had planned to let providers know if they were successful 12 weeks after their bid. An agency spokesperson said last week that all providers that applied to be on the register in December, January and February have now "been notified of the result".

The new register is expected to bring greater scrutiny, following various investigations by this newspaper that discovered, for example, one-man bands with no delivery experience being given access to millions of pounds of apprenticeships funding.

The ESFA will throw providers off the new register if they go 12 months with no delivery after joining the register.

"Applicants will be added or removed from the register as and when the full process of assessing applications has been completed," the ESFA spokesperson said.



## News

# Fraudsters pose as college principal in bid to con recipients out of money

FRASER WHIELDON  
FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK

From front

Exclusive

Lakes College has become the latest victim of a sophisticated email scam in which fraudsters posed as its principal.

Providers were warned about this kind of targeted "phishing" scam – where an imposter pretends to be a trustworthy source in an electronic communication to trick people into transferring money – by the Education and Skills Funding Agency this week.

On Tuesday, fraudsters hacked into the email account of Lakes College boss Chris Nattress and sent a link to his contacts to "review and sign".

Furthermore, FE Week understands that when Nattress's contacts replied to check if the email was genuine, the fraudster replied saying that it was.

They also changed the college's phone number in the email signature

by one digit, and made up a mobile number, so contacts could not check in that way.

Nattress told FE Week: "What we have experienced this week acts as a reminder to all, in the FE sector and further afield, how easy it is to fall victim, and that we must all remain vigilant."

The college's digital team identified the issue before staff received any reports of a problem.

"We have robust systems, controls and procedures in place at the college," Nattress added. "And occasions like this highlight their importance and allow us to enhance our training and security awareness."

The ESFA said clicking a link in a harmful email will take the user to a website that requests user credentials that can be used by the perpetrator to send "harmful" emails from the user's account.

On a mobile device, the harmful emails sometimes appear with a

coloured button saying "Display Message", and oftentimes multiple official-looking email addresses are included to make the messages look legitimate.

The fraudster can request the user changes the bank account it uses for the Department for Education, the ESFA, or another payment provider.

If the imposter is not discovered, a payment may be made to the fraudulent account, the account could be emptied, and a new victim could be targeted.

The agency claims people have suffered "financial losses" because of this scam, but it is unclear how many.

FE Week spoke to an IT security expert who advised anyone who receives a suspected phishing email to not interact with the message but to use alternative means of finding contact information for the sender and to contact them through that to find out if the email is genuine.

The ESFA has additionally advised users to ensure they have firewalls,



strong passwords and anti-virus software in place and to be alert to emails containing seemingly legitimate links.

Users have been asked to email fraud.reports@education.gov.uk if they become aware of any phishing attempts.

If you have you been targeted by this scam, send the phishing emails you

have received to news@feweek.co.uk

This is not the first-time principals have been specifically targeted by fraudsters: in 2014, emails purportedly from the ESFA's predecessor body the Skills Funding Agency were sent to providers, asking them to send details that would allow the fraudster to take money from the provider's bank account.

# IfATE backtracks on plan to keep assessment grades a total secret

BILLY CAMDEN  
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Exclusive

The government's apprenticeships quango has U-turned on plans to grade end-point assessment organisations (EPAOs) without sharing the results with them.

However, the information will still be kept a secret from the public, and EPAOs will not be allowed to advertise their ratings unless they're granted special permission.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education's (IfATE) published a new framework on Wednesday that "sets the standard" for external quality assurance (EQA) and explains how end-point assessment organisations should be monitored to ensure the process is fair and consistent.

A few hours before its publication, the framework was shared with FE Week, including a "manual" that explained how "risk ratings" were to be given for each EPAO.

It stated that the ratings "will not be published or made available to EPAOs, but will be stored on the institute's digital system".

The risk ratings will be 1 (low), 2 (medium) and 3 (high).

The proposed secrecy sparked controversy when reported by FE Week. One managing director of an end-point assessment organisation claimed to have successfully overturned previous EQA risk assessments and was therefore very concerned that in future these grades wouldn't be shared.

Hours after our story went live, the institute got in touch with this newspaper to say the framework was still in draft, and the final version will in fact state that the ratings will be shared with EPAOs.

"The risk-rating grades will only be shared with EPAOs and this is reflected in more recent drafts of the manual," a spokesperson said.

But, he added, there are "no plans to share this information publicly at this stage".

The first "working edition" of the framework's manual, which will "make



this clear", will be published on July 1.

"EPAO understanding of their grades is an important aspect of ensuring quality and lifting it where needed," the spokesperson added.

He also confirmed that EPAOs will not be allowed to publicise their ratings without the institute's permission.

The risk ratings will be determined by various factors, including data on their performance by apprentices and feedback (including complaints) from apprentices, employers and training providers.

right to know whether they are placing their custom with the right EPAO.

"Many EPAOs have made serious investments in minimising the risk of capacity and consistency issues that could undermine the hard work that an apprentice has done to complete an apprenticeship.

"But for those that haven't, an 'inadequate' outcome should definitely lead to action being taken, and if improvements are not evidenced quickly, then the outcome should be published."

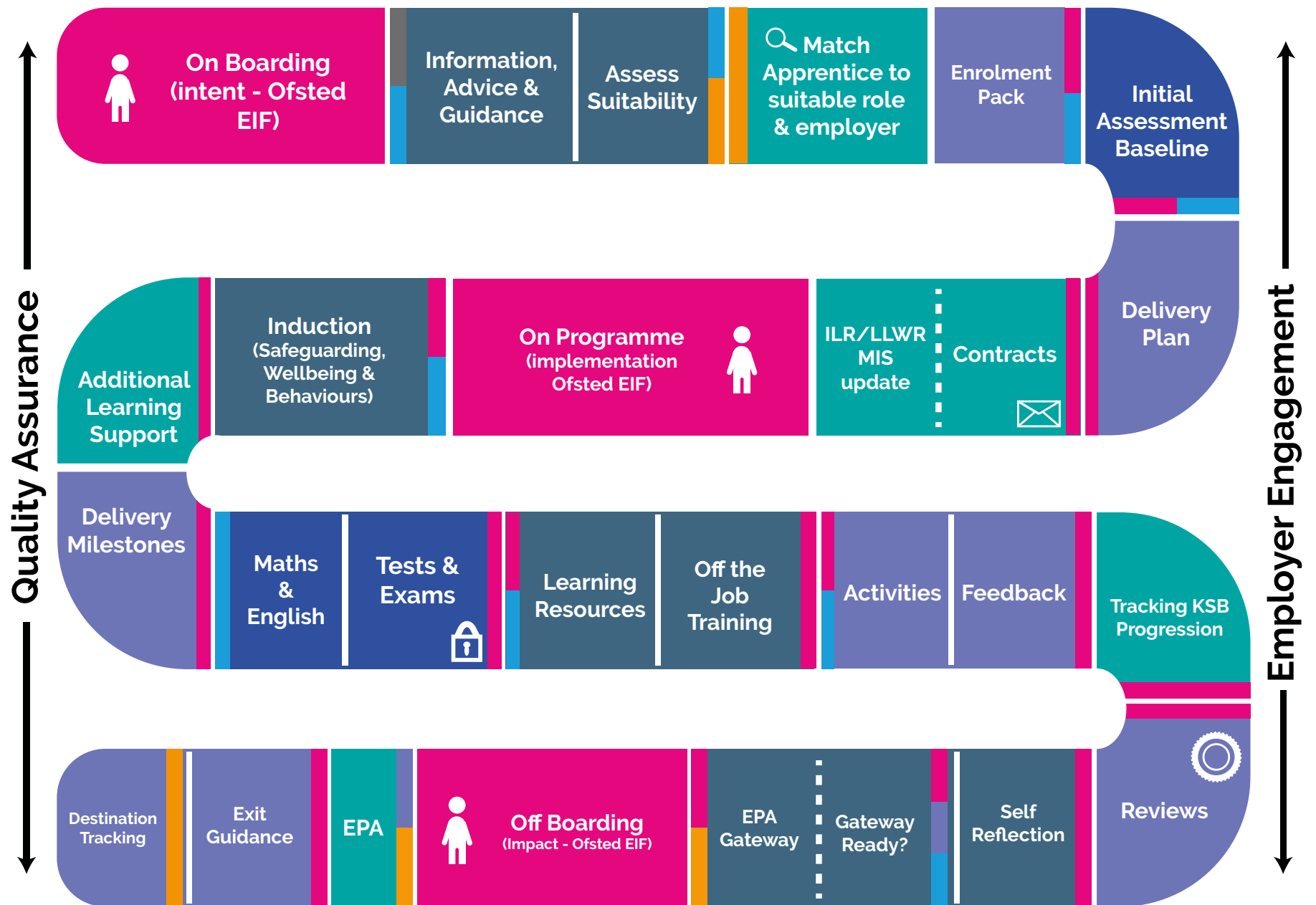
The framework, which is mandatory and must be adhered to by all EQA providers, sets out five principles that underpin "EQA functions": relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning.

It was widely welcomed by the likes of the Federation of Awarding Bodies and the AELP for providing greater "consistency and coherence".

Commenting on its launch, Nikki Christie, the institute's deputy director for apprenticeship assessment and quality, said: "This new framework will ensure that rigorous standards are maintained with EQA for years to come."



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## News

# Milton: pre-apprenticeship salary limit 'palatable' solution to funding shortfall

**BILLY CAMDEN**  
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Imposing a salary cap to constrain the apprenticeship budget would "be at odds with encouraging lifelong learning" and would restrict public sector services such as the NHS from upskilling their workforce, the skills minister has been warned.

Anne Milton was quizzed on the future affordability of the programme after what is likely to be her swansong speech, at this week's Association of Employment and Learning Providers conference.

In December, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education estimated that the apprenticeship budget could be overspent £1.5 billion by 2021-22, and the National Audit Office warned in March that "something is going to have to give" in the upcoming spending review.

Asked which "hard choices" the Department for Education could make to ensure the budget doesn't go bust if the Treasury does not invest more money into the system, Milton said there are "lots of things government could do".

But a "pre-apprenticeship salary limit" was "one of the most palatable".

In a follow-up interview with *FE Week*, the minister was clear that this was "my idea, not government policy" but confirmed that civil servants have started analysis on what impact the salary cap could have.

"We are looking at everything," she said.

"Alongside making the best possible case for your budget, you also need to see how you are going to live within your means."

But she wouldn't commit to a figure, such as the £30,000 that could be used for migrants post-Brexit, as "it would be wrong to extrapolate from the migration figures any particular figure".

She explained that nurses, for example, will often come from within a trust and might drop a salary band in order to do an apprenticeship, "so you have to factor all that in as well".

According to the NHS's pay structure, employees earning over £30,000 (from band 6) can include a school nurse, experienced paramedic, health records officer, clinical psychology trainee and biomedical scientist.

Employees on a band 7, where salaries range from £37,000 to £43,000, can include a communications manager, estates manager, high-intensity therapist and advanced speech and language therapist.

Unsurprisingly, the salary cap idea has been met with hostility from higher education providers.

Jon Bouffler, director of learning development services at Anglia Ruskin University, one of the biggest MBA apprenticeship providers for people aged 25 or over, said: "Potentially imposing salary limits could be seen as being at odds with the aim of encouraging lifelong learning, allowing people to retrain to meet the UK's changing employment needs.

"It is also contrary to the widening participation mission, as we believe the opportunity to learn new skills and knowledge should be open to all."

Adrian Anderson, chief executive of the University Vocational Awards Council, the body that represents over 90 universities delivering apprenticeships, warned that any salary cap introduced would have a "massive and detrimental impact on the ability of employers to raise productivity and enhance the delivery of public sector services".

Writing in *FE Week* (page 16), he said: "A salary cap would impose a significant constraint on the ability of the NHS, police forces and so on to use 'their' (as often described by the government's policy) levy to raise the skills of their employees to help raise the efficiency of public sector services."



Anne Milton

Mark Dawe, chief executive of the AELP, said the salary cap idea is "interesting in that it does correlate with the Migration Advisory Committee and Home Office discussions on limiting the number of migratory workers earning less than £30,000 a year" but it is "frankly another minefield".

"Unless the limit was raised significantly, we believe that the proposal is probably a non-runner," he added.

Milton's proposal wasn't met with total condemnation.

Tom Richmond, a policy advisor to former skills minister Matt Hancock

and now director of think-tank EDSK, said: "If the government wants to focus the levy funds on younger entrants to different professions while also supporting disadvantaged learners, such as those who are unemployed, a pre-apprenticeship salary cap would help to achieve this.

"That said, the process of choosing the right salary cap would be entirely arbitrary and it would inevitably cut off many higher-level apprenticeships, which would irk some employers."

See *FE Week's* supplement from the AELP conference printed with this edition for more reaction to the minister's proposal.

## Ofsted's new framework is not a good fit with FE providers

**JESSICA FINO**  
JESSICA.FINO@FEWEEK.CO.UK

With just over two months to go until the new education inspection framework comes into action, Ofsted has found its model for assessing the quality of lessons "does not fit" FE providers.

In what one adviser to a former skills minister called an "extremely worrying" admission, the education watchdog said it needs to come up with a "more suitable" approach in time for the rollout of the framework in September.

Calls have now been made for the inspectorate to delay the launch for a year.

Ofsted published research into the validity and reliability of its inspection methods this week.

The first set of reports focused on lesson visits and scrutiny of students' work – two of the three main pillars of the new "quality of education"

judgment.

Ofsted said its lesson visits "did not show the same level of reliability in further education and skills (FES) settings as it did in schools" because the model it proposed "does not fit with all delivery methods and contexts in FES" since it is "essentially classroom-based".

"Reliability was considerably weaker in the college sample," it added. "Overall, the findings from the college observations suggest that our prototype model is not a good fit for lessons in a FES context, as it is likely to be looking at the wrong things. This requires more research.

"The FES context is likely to be incompatible with the current model design. We therefore need to develop an alternative observation model that is not associated with the school context."

The report added that workbook scrutiny may also not be applicable to FES settings. "Students in this sector may not typically be required to bring



Amanda Spielman

in their work to classes (for example, sixth-form pupils), and the main written activity during lessons may be note-taking."

As a result, Ofsted said it is working on developing a model that is more suited to FE provision.

Tom Richmond, adviser to former

skills minister Matt Hancock and founder and director of think-tank EDSK, said: "With just two months to go until the new inspection framework commences, it is extremely worrying that Ofsted has admitted at this late stage that its proposed inspection model is 'not a good fit' for FES

providers because 'it is likely to be looking at the wrong things'.

"Concerns about the consistency of inspectors' judgments have been around for many years, and this new research from Ofsted shows why these concerns are entirely justified.

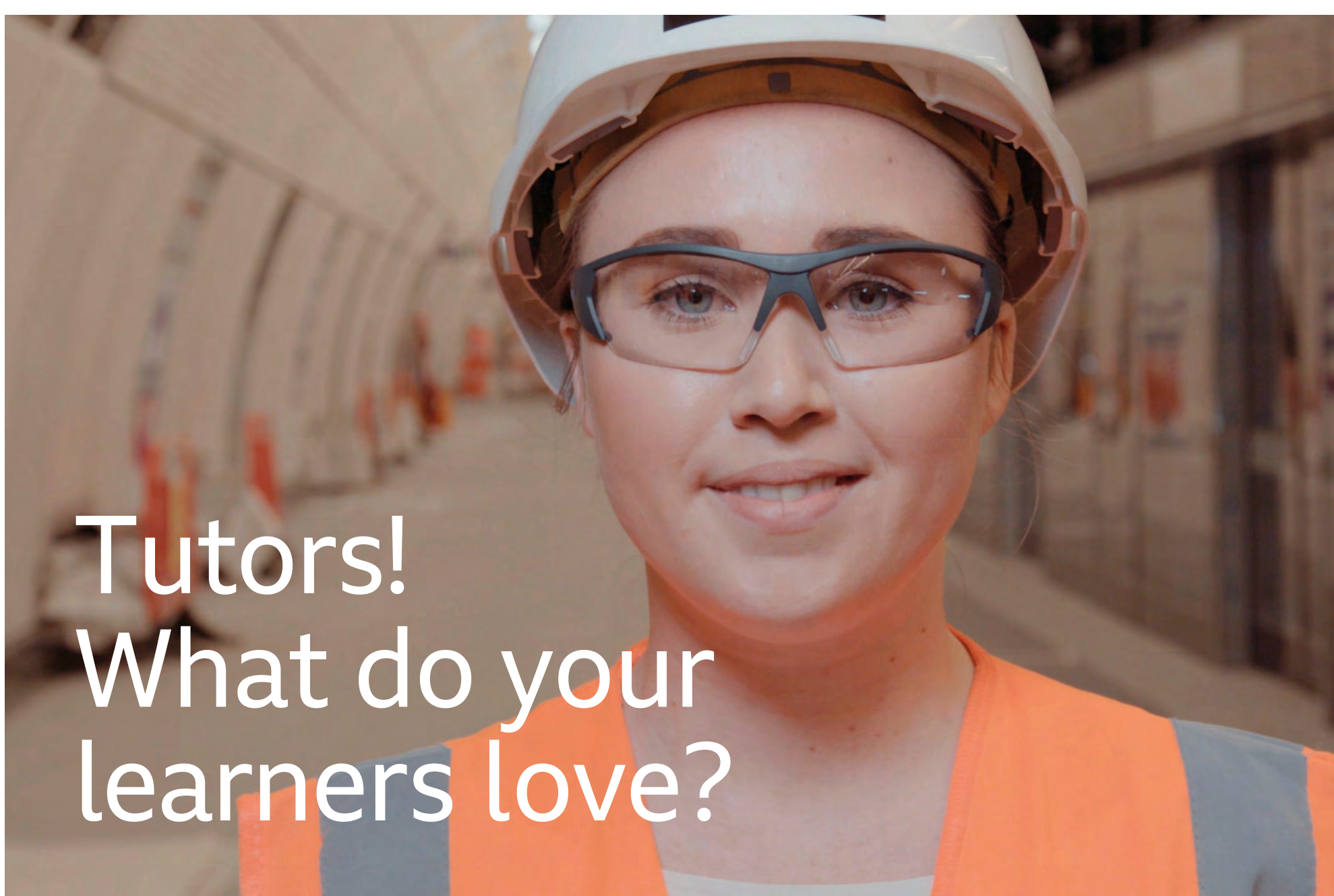
"The new framework should be delayed by a year to allow for a proper evaluation of Ofsted's new methods before they are used to inspect colleges and apprenticeships because it is clear that Ofsted's planned approach is highly unlikely to produce consistent judgments between inspectors."

He added: "It is not acceptable to expect educators and leaders in the FE sector to have their institutions assessed when such significant problems remain unresolved."

Ofsted did not provide a response at the time of going to press.

The education watchdog, led by chief inspector Amanda Spielman, published the final education inspection framework last month after a three-month public consultation.





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## News

# Proportion of colleges with over half of lecturers on casual contracts triples

FRASER WHIELDON  
FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK

The percentage of colleges employing over half of their teaching staff on casual contracts has tripled to 29 per cent, according to a new report.

The University and College Union sent a freedom of information (FOI) request to all colleges and surveyed 789 staff working in colleges, adult education and prison education, which revealed many are having to rely on food banks and second jobs to get by.

Analysis of responses to the FOI showed a "shocking" 66 out of 226 (29 per cent) of colleges, reported over 50 per cent of their teaching staff were on some form of insecure contract – up from just 19 out of 202 (9 per cent) in 2016.

And over two-thirds of respondents (71 per cent) to the survey said they believed their mental health had been damaged by working on casual contracts and almost half (45 per cent) said it had impacted on their physical health.

The UCU's head of further education Andrew Harden called the findings "damning" and said it lifted the lid on how staff without secure contracts are "struggling to make ends meet", despite

holding down multiple jobs.

Casual contracts can be fixed-term, which normally last for one year; zero-hours contracts, which do not offer a minimum number of hours; hourly paid contracts, which offer some hours; or staff can be employed through an agency.

What makes them so damaging, as reported by one survey respondent, is that if classes are cancelled, lecturers on casual contracts are not paid.

**"Having enough money to buy substantial and healthy food is sometimes near impossible"**

The unnamed respondent had to resort to a food bank after being told their classes had been cancelled, and has in the past had to live on cereal, crackers and water, "if I am lucky".

They added: "Having enough money to buy substantial and healthy food once the bills are paid is sometimes near impossible."

Sixty nine per cent of survey



respondents said they had earned less than £1,500 a month, and 87 per cent earned less than £2,000 a month.

Over half said they had trouble paying their bills.

FE Week spoke to a lecturer at City College Norwich, Nicola Gibson (see story below), who said she was working an extra two jobs, and has earned as little as £600 a month at one point.

While she receives £5 holiday pay every hour she works, benefits like that are not the same for everyone, with one respondent reporting they had to return to work "too early" after being off sick with cancer, because: "I wasn't receiving

sick pay, plus I had the constant worry someone else would be given my hours."

Teachers' health has also been affected, with one saying they had felt "suicidal" and developed "a type of epilepsy, which may well have been linked to the stress of losing teaching hours".

The extent of casual contracts among FE teachers creates another problem, as Harden explains: "None of this is good for staff, but it is also extremely damaging for students, as teachers' working conditions are their learning conditions."

Over half the respondents disagreed

that they have enough paid time to enable them to prepare adequately for their classes, nor that they have enough time left over after teaching to keep up to date with the latest scholarship in their subject.

Additionally, 84 per cent said they had considered leaving the profession; with one newly qualified teacher saying they are already looking for work outside the sector.

Asked why colleges employ staff on casual contracts, Kirsti Lord, deputy chief executive at the Association of Colleges, said: "Nobody should have to use foodbanks, or worry about how they are going to pay their bills.

"We are working with UCU and others to make clear to government that 'the end of austerity' must also apply to colleges."

The UCU has recommended a number of ways to improve the security of lecturers' employment, which includes Ofsted inspecting for any negative impact on quality of provision as a result of instability in teaching teams caused by casual contracting.

When asked if the inspectorate would consider doing this, a spokesperson said inspectors will take into account evidence of effective staff management when writing their reports "to ensure the delivery of good-quality education".

## 'I feel very un-grown-up'

A college lecturer on a casual contract says she has had to live off £600 a month, and has not been on holiday in four years.

Creative arts teacher Nicola Gibson has worked at City College Norwich for ten years, and has joined hundreds of college teachers in speaking out against their fixed-hours and zero-hours contracts.

Hers is a permanent, variable-hours contract, but there is no guarantee of a minimum amount of work, and as it is not a fixed-hours contract, the college was not obliged to employ her after four years.

She said: "You never know how much money you have coming in.

"I've gone from taking £1,200 a month, to £600 a month and I have to think about exactly how I will make ends meet."

She is paid an hourly rate of £25 an hour, which includes £5 in holiday pay; but if she works fewer than 450 hours a year, she has less than a week to work out her hours and submit a claim to be paid the same month.

Her situation has meant Nicola has not been

on holiday in four years, since a relative gifted her one.

She finds it "galling" when there are people working in the same office as her at the college, doing exactly the same job on a permanent contract and living a more regular lifestyle.

Much like teachers on secure permanent contracts, Nicola is having to prepare for lessons, teach them, and care for her ten-year-old daughter.

This is in addition to her other jobs: running freelance craft lessons and working at a technical college.

But she is determined her mental health will not suffer because of the way she works. "I think it's very important to compartmentalise these aspects of your life because I don't want to become a victim of this system in that sense: someone who is miserable and downtrodden and hard-done-by.

"I am happy and I want to enjoy my life and I want to enjoy what I can have based on what I can earn."

Nicola really enjoys her work, and believes

she is privileged to work with the students, but says she doesn't feel she can bring them her best and be recognised for it.

She has considered leaving the profession, as she wants to be a "grown-up", which she doesn't feel she can be because of the nature of her job.

She describes her situation as like that of a student, scraping to make ends meet.

"I feel very un-grown-up as somebody who is theoretically in a professional job, and with my qualifications and is hardworking and dedicated."

Asked what she would do to improve the conditions for casual workers in colleges, Nicola says the work is OK in the short-term but people ought to be offered an ongoing role after several years.

"I would like the security my team-mates have, because if they're entitled to it, I would like to think I was entitled to it too."

She said it was important that people spoke out about their experiences of casual contracts. However, she understands why people did not want to speak out as, in a chilling reminder of the insecurity of these contracts, she admitted it "was very easy to not have a contract at all".



Nicola Gibson

A City College Norwich spokesperson said its use of casual or supply contracts is "minimal and are only used in emergency situations to cover short periods of unexpected absences, such as sickness".

She added that the college is currently "reviewing the way in which permanent sessional staff are paid to minimise the impact of any changes to delivery hours that can occur each year as course requirements evolve".





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## News

# 'I'm just too much sauce': An exit

FRASER WHIELDON  
FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Outgoing NUS president Shakira Martin talks Fraser Whieldon through her tumultuous two-year incumbency

The president of the National Union of Students has promised to continue to champion further education as she prepares to leave office.

In a wide-ranging interview with *FE Week*, Shakira Martin said she didn't regret telling opponents to "f\*\*k off", and has also left the door open to running for parliament and returning to her old college as its principal.

**"Two years is enough. I'm really happy to be moving on"**

Martin is preparing to leave the role on Sunday after serving the maximum two, one-year terms in the role – something that has given her great jubilation. "I made it throuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuugh," she said.

She added that she was happy to leave the role, but that leaving was bittersweet, and she stressed the importance of having "fresh blood" in the role.

"Two years is enough. I'm really happy to be moving on. I'm a totally different person to the Shakira that started many years ago.

"When I say different, I'm still the exact same funny, raw, challenging person, but different in terms of understanding the world a bit more; being able to navigate through these



complex policies and procedures, and being a better mother to my two daughters."

She is looking forward to spending

more time with the two, completing school runs and attending sports days, and said her next job was likely to be somewhere in the education sector.

She is also considering running for parliament. However, she says she has too much "sauce" – meaning style, confidence and swagger – for the House of Commons at the moment.

"Politics is a mess at the moment and it doesn't even deserve me right now. I'll give it a couple of years. Let's see what happens."

Another of her career aspirations is to be the principal of an FE college, preferably her old college, Lewisham Southwark.

A former president of the college's union, Martin was elected president

of NUS in 2017 and became only the second NUS president not to have gone to university, having instead completed a diploma at Lewisham Southwark College.

**"I don't regret telling people to 'F\*\*k off'"**

The former NUS vice-president of *FE* defeated the controversial president of the time, Malia Bouattia, by 402 votes to 272.

What followed was arguably a controversial tenure – though

she preferred to call it "character-building" – during which Martin faced allegations of bullying from the then-NUS women's officer, Hareem Ghani.

"That has been awful," Martin said. "That is something I will never personally get over because the people who put in those allegations were the very same people who talk about social mobility, getting black women and working-class people into leadership.

"And it's just really awful our political environment has become so hostile and unhealthy on social media and [to] not think it's going to have detrimental implications for people's lives. That article is on the internet for the rest of my life.

"I am a strong, articulate,



Martin featured in *FE Week's* edition 157 cartoon



# It interview with NUS president



The Independent, Daily Mail and The Sun.

Martin said she had learned that the political environment is “hostile” and people are very “loose-tongued”, but rebuffed accusations of bullying, saying that she is instead a “bully-hater” who fights against bullies.

Martin also regretted allowing people to get to her, which made her less productive for a couple of days. As her job involves reacting to events, those couple of days could have been crucial – such as when the NUS faced bankruptcy in connection with a £3 million deficit in 2018.

The union had to suspend elections and make staff redundant but avoided collapsing altogether.

Though Martin warns that the NUS is not out of the woods yet, she said “the NUS doors could have closed in March” and the organisation has a good foundation upon which to build in the future.

Elsewhere, she has focused on improving student voice on campuses, and has said that every college campus needs its own sabbatical officer and that students ought to be on college boards with the proper support and training to serve effectively.

“FE needs to be recognised for the true value of what it does for our community and individuals. When we talk about improving social justice and mobility, FE does that in one.”

She has also argued in the past for the re-implementation of student maintenance grants, a goal that was also included in the Augar Review.

On whether she expected the government to U-turn on its 2015 decision to scrap the grants, Martin said: “If the government wants some legacy other than Brexit, they need to do something around education.

“I think personally that student

**“Politics doesn’t even deserve me right now”**

maintenance needs to be brought back immediately, it needs to be in line with current inflation and needs to be fit for purpose.

“And it needs to be supporting students to be able actually focus on their studies and not have to

challenging woman and unapologetically so, but now I feel like I have to almost mitigate those accusations to prove I’m not that.”

She denied that her tenure has been controversial, instead saying: “Look, I wasn’t built for NUS, and NUS politics wasn’t built for people like me.”

Asked if she had any regrets, she said: “I don’t regret telling people to f\*\*k off. I regret doing it on social media. I did mean it, but I didn’t mean for it to end up in a newspaper.”

The expletive was posted by Martin on Facebook after the NUS Trans Conference and socialist groups attempted to launch a motion of no confidence in her.

Her comments were picked up by

## KEY DATES

**2013**

Martin elected president of Lewisham Southwark College’s students union

**June 2015**

Martin elected NUS vice-president for further education

**April 2017**

Martin elected NUS president

**January 2018**

Bullying row erupts at union, after Martin is accused by the then-women’s officer of bullying officers

**March 2018**

Martin reelected NUS president

**November 2018**

Martin’s letter to NUS-affiliated students’, warning them about

the £3 million deficit, is leaked to the press

**February 2019**

Facebook posts from Martin’s account emerge, wherein she tells people trying to bring a motion of no confidence against her to “F\*\*K OFFFFFFFFF”

**April 2019**

Zamzam Ibrahim elected new NUS president

work two or three jobs and do their coursework at 3am in the morning because they don’t have the finances.”

Her advice to the incoming NUS president, Zamzam Ibrahim, is “Be true to yourself” and remember: “It’s bigger than NUS national conference. This is about the students that don’t even make it into the college

**“Student maintenance needs to be brought back immediately”**

doorstep.

“But enjoy it because it goes by very quickly. And I’ll be here for you, because we’re part of a family.”

She pledged to continue to champion further education wherever she goes, and thanked FE Week for having her back during her time as president.





## Profile

Introducing...

## JULIE MILLS

CEO &amp; Group Principal, Milton Keynes College

JESS STAUFENBERG  
NEWS@FEWEEK.CO.UK**From school drop-out to college chief executive, Julie Mills has not done things in a conventional way**

When Julie Mills was a 16-year-old in the early 1980s, she quit her sixth-form college and started working in a job centre where she dished out unemployment benefits. Now principal and chief executive of Milton Keynes College and with a PhD, she recalls the relief she felt quitting school. "I thought I already knew everything. You had to call everyone 'Mr' or 'Mrs', and I thought 'I'm not longer a child, this isn't for me'. So I left."

Unemployment was "massive" in the early 1980s and Mills says she was kept busy at the job centre for four years. But she soon found herself drawn back to learning and ended up in further education. Her impressive 30-year career was recently recognised with an OBE for services

to promoting business and education links.

As head of Milton Keynes she oversees 600 apprentices and about 14,000 learners, including adults, and recently secured funding for an Institute of Technology.

You might think her work in FE was first driven by a wish to help the disadvantaged, the have-nots and second-chancers; yet Mills, who has also taught in prisons during her time at the college, isn't a huge fan of this last-chance saloon portrayal of the sector.

"That prison work, and our other work, sounds like we're all about second chances. But actually this is about excellence. We're passionate about people who really want to do something.

"FE is very good at supporting people who need that little extra support, but actually it is about excellence and providing people with the best pathway."

This belief in the power of doing something and doing it well, was

inspired by her family. Her mother was a primary teacher and her father an engineer. "Probably what influenced me when I was a teenager was my dad when he took the brave decision to leave his job at an engineering company and set up a business," Mills says. "It gave me a bit of an assumption that you can make changes and give it a go. What's the worst that can happen?"

**"As soon as I walked into the classroom, I loved it"**

With that drive behind her, Mills took one-day release from the job centre to study today's equivalent of a BTEC in business at Barnfield College in Luton and began to take on bookkeeping work.

She started an Open University course at 21 and graduated with a BSc Hons. Then one night, when she was in a bar with other students, a tutor asked her if she'd like to try teaching bookkeeping.

"As soon as I walked into that classroom I loved it. My technology was a boardmarker and it was a night class. I loved the teaching – everything about it."

It turned out that the evening classes were held at her old school, which Mills drily notes was "quite ironic". She trained part-time as an adult education teacher and the first job she landed was at the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (Nacro), where she taught employability skills while still teaching bookkeeping in the evenings.

She joined Milton Keynes in 1990 as a lecturer in finance. In 2011, she was appointed chief executive and took the college from "satisfactory" to grade 3, before achieving a grade 2 in 2017. Ofsted's report is glowing: "Leaders...have made rapid progress in building a culture of continual improvement with determination," it says. And later: "Students benefit from imaginative, well-structured and interesting lessons."

That early work with Nacro proved useful when, three years after joining Milton Keynes, it advertised for a deputy head of education based at the nearby Woodhill prison. She was interested by the "challenges of the context", she says. "You've lots of things you have to be more conscious of than in other education settings, like security. I really enjoyed it." From there she became head of prison education for Milton Keynes and spearheaded a contract bid to the Ministry of Justice to deliver prison education across numerous providers.

At one point, the college ran education services in 30 prisons. Now it's closer to 20, working with about 15,000 offenders, including high-security institutions such as Belmarsh Prison in southeast London. The college is one of just a handful of education providers working in prisons; the others include Manchester College, Weston College near Bristol and training provider PeoplePlus. Each prison has a "mini-college" with English, maths and vocational lessons. Lower security prisons partner with national employers



The official launch of the Institute of Technology bid at Bletchley Park



**“FE is not about second chances. It’s about excellence”**



Julie Mills receiving her 'Principal of the Year' award by the National Centre for Diversity

such as Timpsons, Boots, Greggs and Premier Inn to work on employment when prisoners are released. Milton Keynes has helped 700 offenders into employment since 2015.

Gathering a team of people to win a government contract of that scale appears to be a special skill that Mills has. About four years ago she began eyeing up an abandoned building at Bletchley Park, the site of the famous Enigma codebreakers, including Alan Turing, during the Second World War. “I was waiting for funding to come up,” she admits. And she won it – £28 million to open a prestigious Institute

of Technology (IoT). Milton Keynes was one of only nine colleges to win bids for the institutes, which will specialise in levels 4 and 5 STEM subjects. It will open with capacity for 1,500 students in September 2021. Sir John Dermot Turing, Alan Turing’s nephew, supported her bid.

Reaching for the top has always been Mills’ bag, it seems. “I’ve got about 400 ideas a day,” she says. Another goal was to complete her PhD on prison staff “before I was 40”. Since 2015 she writes regularly for The Huffington Post, calling for everything from better FE funding to more women in STEM.

So where now? The OBE recognises Mills’ efforts in many areas. But the IoT means that she now has a challenge

**“Who am I to talk? I dropped out of sixth form”**

on her hands. There needs to be enough local young people with level 3 qualifications to ensure a steady

stream of talent to take level 4 and 5 qualifications at the IoT. The trouble is that the city has more jobs than young people.

“Here you can get a job with a good salary with few skills, so one of our big challenges is to keep them in education, and get them to a higher level.”

The irony doesn’t escape her. “Who am I to talk? I dropped out of sixth form!”

To help this talent pipeline, Mills has done a huge amount of work on inclusion. “We looked at who was coming into the college and what

they were doing, and asked, ‘does that reflect how the community looks?’

How are we doing on postcode area, ethnicity, age and gender?” In January the college launched a mentoring pilot with 15 disadvantaged young men. The results are due later this month and, if successful, the scheme will be rolled out more widely next year.

This year the National Centre for Diversity named Mills as national principal of the year. It seems to be this capacity for reaching out that can give the IoT its best chance of success. “It’s about giving people the opportunity to do something excellent,” she says.



## News

# Could private training provider cash in after college sell-off?

JESSICA FINO  
JESSICA.FINO@FEWEEK.CO.UK

A national training provider could step in to become the only education provider in Stourbridge, after the area's FE college is sold off.

Skills Training UK, which currently trains more than 2,000 learners across London, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Dudley and Brighton, said it would launch the new centre for 16-18-year-olds "subject to demand".

Cash-strapped Birmingham Metropolitan College (BMet) announced last month that it was to sell off Stourbridge College – one of the group's five main divisions – and transfer its 900 learners to two other nearby colleges in September, following a review from the FE Commissioner.

Dudley College of Technology will take on its apprenticeship provision, art and design, construction, equine, foundation learning, digital and ICT and motor vehicle; and Halesowen

College will take over responsibility for business, early-years, health and social care, public services, sport and science.

A "proposed support for Stourbridge students" page on the Skills Training UK website states: "We are aware of the proposed transfer of Stourbridge College and the effect this would have on the local community... Complete the short form on this page to let us know if you support our proposal to open a new Stourbridge Training Centre".

The new facility could offer level 1 and level 2 BTEC courses, which may be suitable for school students who had hoped to progress to Stourbridge College in September and who do not want to travel to Dudley or Halesowen. Subjects include business enterprise, warehousing and storage, care, customer service and business administration.

The training provider told *FE Week* that it "always assesses the level of local demand before opening any new centre", and is asking school



leavers, parents/carers, teachers and other community members to register their interest for a Stourbridge centre online.

Martin Dunford, chairman at Skills Training UK, who is also chair of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, said: "Skills Training UK has been successful in the West Midlands, with established training centres in Dudley and Walsall and two Academies for Business, Industry and Technology in

Birmingham and Wolverhampton.

"Because of increasing demand, we are looking into growing further capacity in the whole West Midlands region, and Stourbridge is one possibility."

Operations manager Joanne Heywood added: "Our tutors help learners to develop their skills and confidence so they can progress to their next stage – further education, an apprenticeship, or employment.

"With small group sizes and bespoke

mentoring support available, we can offer young people the support they need to succeed. But we need to establish local demand first."

BMet had £5 million spent on the Stourbridge campus in 2015, which encompasses "centres of excellence" for engineering, health and social care and early-years.

Stourbridge had a long-term debt of £7.6 million when it merged with BMet. The college group said it is "currently working on a recovery plan to repay the outstanding balance and will work closely with the ESFA on this".

The University and College Union (UCU) is organising a protest this Saturday against the closure.

The union said the move would affect hundreds of staff and students, and that there had been "no meaningful consultation about the move with the local community, staff or students".

It added that "many students have raised concerns about the cost and additional time" it will take for students to travel to Dudley and Halesowen.

The decision to sell off Stourbridge College was a "shock" to the town's local MP Margot James, who is also the digital minister, and previously described its loss as "tragic" in an interview with *FE Week*.

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## Vice Principal 14-19 and Business Skills

Salary Grade FE pay scale points 51-53  
£56,313 - £59,738

City College Peterborough is an Adult and Community Learning college based in Peterborough that is part of Peterborough City Council but operates with a Governing Board, under an arms-length delivery model. Alongside the college's delivery of the Adult Education Budget, it maximises the skills sets of its staff and knowledge of working within the local community and businesses to deliver other aspects of the skills sector, including Study Skills to 14-19 year-olds and apprenticeships.

Due to the successful promotion of the current post holder in becoming a Head of Service within a different Local Authority, we now have a vacancy for a Vice Principal for 14-19 and Business Skills.

This is an amazing opportunity for the right individual in what is an exciting time for the College. We are looking for a talented professional to take up this key role in which, as

a Vice Principal, you will also sit on the College Senior Leadership Team, helping to steer the Service.

Experience of working in a comparable service, college or educational provider is required alongside exceptional interpersonal skills and experience of fostering and working in partnership.

To succeed in this role, you must also be ambitious and enjoy working to high standards in a fast-paced, ever-changing environment whilst treating all students, staff, colleagues and partners with humanity and respect.

### You will need to:

- be brave, discovering what's possible, pushing the limits and seeking out new opportunities.

- commit to each and every student, ensuring they are supported to achieve their potential and be inspired to achieve.
- understand the new Education Inspection Framework and the importance of curriculum design, delivery and impact, knowing what outstanding looks like.
- understand and be committed to the local skills agenda, including an understanding of employer needs.

This is an exciting and innovative time for the College and we are seeking to appoint a Vice Principal who is equally excited and motivated by this opportunity and challenge. In return, we offer a diverse and stimulating work environment in which no two days are the same and where you will have exceptional educational opportunities to guide and inspire learners and staff.

For more information and to apply for this is post, visit [www.citycollegepeterborough.ac.uk](http://www.citycollegepeterborough.ac.uk)

Closing date: 5.00pm Tuesday 9th July 2019 | Interviews will be held on Monday 15th July 2019



Langley College is part of the Windsor Forest Colleges Group and is its centre for technical and vocational training and apprenticeships. It has benefited from a £30 million investment in its

campus and is equipped with the latest industry standard equipment, workshops and studios – including its own multi-trades bungalow and mock hospital ward.

### Head of Apprenticeships and Assessment

#### Langley, Berkshire

It's an exciting time to join our team. We are looking for an inspiring and ambitious Head of Apprenticeships and Assessment to deliver outstanding leadership and play a key role in the strategic delivery and quality of the Apprenticeship provision at the Windsor Forest Colleges Group.

Our College is at the heart of exciting industry developments. With Heathrow and Crossrail on our doorstep, this is a fantastic opportunity for an ambitious person who is committed and

dedicated to lead us into the future.

As the Head of Apprenticeships and Assessment, you will ensure the high quality of education for all aspects of an apprentice's journey. You will also play a key role in preparing for and taking part in future OFSTED, External Audit and other quality assurance or monitoring visits and ensure the successful transition from Apprenticeship frameworks to Standards in line with Apprenticeship reforms.

**Contract type: Permanent role**

**Salary: Up to £50,500 per annum depending on qualifications, skills and experience**

Closing date: midday on Friday 12th July 2019.

Interviews will be held on 23 July 2019.

Please apply at <http://www.windsor-forest.ac.uk/jobs-a-careers.html> and complete an online application form.



## Apprenticeship Manager

West London College (WLC) has an exciting opportunity to lead on and manage, the delivery of Apprenticeships across all sectors, providing a positive, pro-active approach which delivers outstanding outcomes for apprentices and employers.

Responsible for driving forward quality improvements and maximising achievement, including oversight of the internal and external quality assurance processes for Apprenticeship provision. This is a great opportunity to lead on cross-college apprenticeships and training areas to positively impact on the strategic direction of the service.

The successful candidate will be passionate about Apprenticeships and have a strong track record of ensuring Apprentices have an outstanding experience. They will have the leadership skills to drive and manage change and to design innovative and flexible delivery models to complete the transition to the new apprenticeship standards.

The successful candidate will be responsible for monitoring the progress of apprentices and the delivery of outstanding timely achievement rates and progression opportunities, as well as helping to continue to grow the Apprenticeship offer.

**Your commitment to the values of our College - Excellence, Ambition, Focus, Accountability, Inclusion and Integrity - will be evident in everything you do.**

**Hours:** 36 hours per week

**Tenure:** Permanent

**Salary:** up to £50,000 dependant on experience

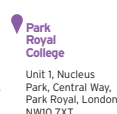
**Closing Date:** Wednesday 10th July 2019

**Interviews to be held:** 17th July 2019

**We are committed to equality and diversity and expect our staff to share this commitment.**

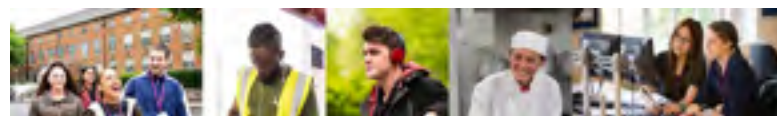
**The safety and welfare of our staff and learners is extremely important to us and is why we pride ourselves on our Safeguarding procedures.**

**All positions are subject to (formerly CRB) and your start date will be dependent on receipt of satisfactory DBS clearance.**

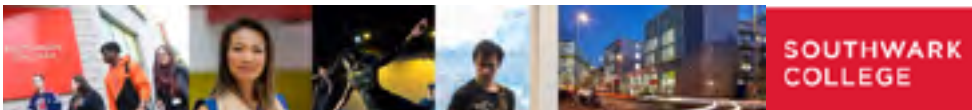




**Southwark College - Vice Principal**  
**Lewisham College - Vice Principal**  
Salary: Up to 85k pa



LEWISHAM COLLEGE



SOUTHWARK COLLEGE

These Vice Principal roles will make a significant contribution to providing excellent education and training whilst building an offer that meets the skills needs of the areas served by the two colleges.

Supporting the Principals in driving excellence in quality and performance as well as delivering growth and ensuring our students receive an outstanding experience, the Vice Principals will also contribute to the delivery of the group's strategy to establish the colleges as successful standalone organisations.

We have retained the services of FE Associates to support us with these crucial appointments. Interested parties are advised to have an initial conversation with our lead consultant, Jo Johnston. This can be arranged by contacting [recruitment@fea.co.uk](mailto:recruitment@fea.co.uk).

For more information and candidate packs visit: [www.fea.co.uk/jobs](http://www.fea.co.uk/jobs)

**Closing date:**  
**5pm on Thursday 4th July 2019**

**Dates for interview:**  
**Southwark College: Tuesday 16th July 2019**  
**Lewisham College: Thursday 18th July 2019**



**Head of Maths**  
**Head of Customer Service and Admissions**  
**Head of HE & Professional Studies**  
**Head of STEM**  
**Head of Apprenticeships**

**Be part of our new beginning and journey to OUTSTANDING!**

Stoke on Trent College is currently going through an exciting period of change and transformation with the creation of a number of management opportunities. We are looking for inspirational and dedicated individuals to join us on our journey to outstanding in a number of areas.

With experience of leading teams along with the ability to inspire and motivate others, you will have the ability to innovate and work proactively and supportively across the organisation.

If you're an enthusiastic individual with a creative approach to problem solving as well as leading and managing change, we look forward to hearing from you.

**Our attractive rewards package includes:**

- A competitive salary offer
- Enhanced leave policies including 39 days annual leave plus bank holidays
- Competitive pension package
- Support for continued professional development
- Health related benefits including individual health care plans
- Access to a state of the art gym
- Onsite nursery and parking
- Restaurant facilities and FREE breakfasts

**Closing date: 3rd July 2019**

For further details and to apply please visit the Stoke on Trent College website: [www.stokecoll.ac.uk/jobs](http://www.stokecoll.ac.uk/jobs), or email [humanresources@stokecoll.ac.uk](mailto:humanresources@stokecoll.ac.uk)

The College is an equal opportunities employer and positively encourages applications from all sections of the community. The College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all staff to share this commitment. All our roles are subject to an Enhanced DBS



**Senior MIS Report Writer**

We have an exciting opportunity for a Senior MIS Report Writer to join our MIS Department. This role will play a vital part in achieving the Colleges Mission and Vision as this post will support the essential functions of the MIS & Reporting Team, which play a key role in accurate management of College data.

**Hours: Full time - 37 hours per week**  
**Salary: £32,500 per annum**  
**Closing date: 14/07/2019**

**About Us:**

Macclesfield College is a leading provider of Further Education and Higher Education in the North West of England. Macclesfield College is part of a modern, inspiring campus providing education to learners of all ages and abilities. Based in East Cheshire, the College offers free secure campus parking and excellent transport links.

Recognised as a 'Good' College at its November 2017 Ofsted inspection. Our mission is simple- "Empowerment through learning".

Macclesfield College has just been confirmed as the overall best-performing FE institution within the key Cheshire and Warrington sub-region, according to the latest statistics published in the National Achievement Rate Tables.

Furthermore on 5th April 2019, Macclesfield College was proud to be awarded winners of the 'Business and Education' category of the East Cheshire Chamber of Commerce Awards.

**The Role:**

We have an exciting opportunity for a Senior MIS Report Writer to join our MIS Department.

This role will play a vital part in achieving the Colleges Mission and Vision as this post will support the essential functions of the MIS & Reporting Team, which play a key role in accurate management of College data.

Main responsibilities will include:

- Supporting the production of accurate, timely and accessible data reports / dashboards.
- Supporting the development, implementation and maintenance of in house systems.
- To work with the Director of MIS and Examinations to ensure delivery of reporting and data supports the strategic direction of the College.

Applicants should ideally have proven experience of working with MIS at an education establishment.

**Closing date for receipt of completed applications is midnight on Sunday 14th July 2019**

The College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

All appointments will be subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check and satisfactory references.

The College is committed to equality of opportunity. We welcome applications from all sections of the community, particularly from members of ethnic minority groups.

Contact Details: For any further details contact Human Resources - Tel: **01625 410007** Email: [recruitment@macclesfield.ac.uk](mailto:recruitment@macclesfield.ac.uk)





## Lecturer in IT

We have an exciting opportunity for a Lecturer to join our IT Department. This role will deliver high quality and innovative teaching, learning and assessment to learners within the IT Faculty.

**Hours: 37 hours per week**

**Salary: £24,641-£32,475 per annum (depending on qualifications and experience)**

**Closing date: 07/07/2019**

**About Us:**

Macclesfield College is a leading provider of Further Education and Higher Education in the North West of England. Macclesfield College is part of a modern, inspiring campus providing education to learners of all ages and abilities. Based in East Cheshire, the College offers free secure campus parking and excellent transport links.

Recognised as a 'Good' College at its November 2017 Ofsted inspection. Our mission is simple- "Empowerment through learning".

Macclesfield College has just been confirmed as the overall best- performing FE institution within the key Cheshire and Warrington sub-region, according to the latest statistics published in the National Achievement Rate Tables.

Furthermore on 5th April 2019, Macclesfield College was proud to be awarded winners of the 'Business and Education' category of the East Cheshire Chamber of Commerce Awards.

**The Role:**

We have an exciting opportunity for a Lecturer to join our IT Department.

This role will deliver high quality and innovative teaching, learning and assessment to learners within the IT Faculty.

Applicants should have a full teaching qualification to current national standards. A Degree or

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The successful candidate will ideally have a specialism in either:

- Hardware & networking (PC maintenance and support), IT system & troubleshooting, and network configuration and administration

OR

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It would also be desirable for the candidate to hold vendor qualification (e.g. Microsoft Cisco).

**Key Responsibilities:**

- To plan teaching, learning and assessment for college programmes using the appropriate college format to ensure effective learning.
- To deliver teaching and learning to at least a consistently good or outstanding standard to achieve high success rates.
- To assess accurately learners work both formatively and summatively against appropriate awarding body criteria to ensure learners achieve their qualifications.
- To support learners progress through personal tutoring and parent/carers evenings to help learners achieve their full potential and progress appropriately.

**Closing date for receipt of completed applications is midnight on Sunday 7th July 2019**

The College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

All appointments will be subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check and satisfactory references.

The College is committed to equality of opportunity. We welcome applications from all sections of the community, particularly from members of ethnic minority groups.

Contact Details: For any further details contact Human Resources – Tel: **01625 410007** Email: **recruitment@macclesfield.ac.uk**

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## EDITORIAL



## There is no point ignoring the looming overspend - employer apprenticeship levy usage needs to be restricted

At the AELP annual conference this week the skills minister, Anne Milton, outlined options being considered to restrict employer usage of their apprenticeship levy.

Given the fall in starts since the apprenticeship reforms began in May 2017, you would be forgiven for wondering why the government would be looking at restricting employer demand.

Any new restriction would also be something of a U-turn given in April the transfer funding percentage was increased 10 to 25 per cent and employer non-levy co-investment halved to 5 per cent.

But as FE Week first reported, despite the fall in starts the overall levy budget is on course to be overspent next year.

The Institute for Apprenticeship's forecasted

levy budget overspend was first exposed by FE Week, and subsequently confirmed in a National Audit Office report in March.

The unforeseen problem was that the "average cost of training an apprentice on a standard is around double what was expected".

This, the NAO reported, could be accounted for because "employers are developing and choosing more expensive standards at higher levels than was expected".

So assuming the budget is not doubled or more in the forthcoming spending review, how should we bring the expenditure down for "expensive standards at higher levels"?

One way is to reduce the funding rates for higher-level standards, something the IfA has controversially begun to do. For example, the management

degree maximum cap has fallen from £27,000 to £25,000.

Providers are also typically setting prices at the maximum cap, something the ESFA could tackle by enforcing their rule requiring reductions to account for prior learning.

And the NAO said options could include "limiting the number of new apprenticeships or reducing the level of public funding for certain types of apprenticeship" as well as "capping the spending of levy-paying employers" and "limiting the number of apprenticeships available for non-levy-paying employers".

But all of these "measures are likely to be unpopular and could damage confidence in the programme", the NAO pointed out.

To the surprise of AELP conference delegates, Milton said she was considering age and level caps but the

most "palatable" option was to set a "pre-apprenticeship salary limit" - which would presumably kill off hundreds of £18,000 MBA apprenticeships.

Killing off the MBA apprenticeships would be welcome if, like me, you worry it is wasted public money that could have been spent on a young person. But is a pre-apprenticeship salary cap the way do it?

In principle, given the choice between funding a new employer or an existing one, limiting apprenticeship funding to people on low wages is attractive.

But with so many wage differentials by profession, sector and region, the setting of a simple cap could prove highly controversial.

My preference has always been to return to pre-2007 when apprenticeships were restricted to young people

- aged under 25 - and there was a separate training and retraining programme for those aged 25 and over (something the National Retraining Scheme could be used for).

And as the Augar report rightly recommended, returning to the policy before May 2017 when graduates were ineligible for apprenticeship funding.

However, the first and least controversial saving would be to remove the 10 per cent levy top-up and shorten the 24 month deadline employers have to use their levy funds.

Whatever is decided it has to be the case that with public money, "employer ownership" cannot be taken literally and before the money runs out the young job entrants need to be prioritised.

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

## Readers' reply



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### College leaders unite - all 203 of them - to demand an end to funding bias towards higher education

The words "about" and "time" (possibly separated by a mild expletive) spring to mind. Let's hope they have an impact ahead of the spending review.

Alan Thomson

### Government says they will fail Conservative manifesto commitment to 3 million apprenticeship starts

Something the rest of us had worked out a year ago!!

Tony Allen

### Procured funding is unfair to independent training providers

With ROTO not

open to new training organisations, colleges don't see the point of a subcontracting agreement worth only £20-£30k to them, given the £100k subcontracting limit for non-ROTO organisation. It's a closed shop - almost mafia-esque. And it is learners who are short-changed as most have goals that big colleges - private, profit-making machines - don't give two hoots about. Very depressing landscape for decent, small providers.

D

### Apprenticeships quango reveals extra £40 per learner charge

For a department full of regulators, it's not very good at regulating

Andy Westwood

### The move towards professionalising governance

Professionalisation doesn't necessarily mean paying governors. Professionalisation can perhaps also be achieved through spending that money on good CPD.

Naureen Khalid

### AELP chair accuses DfE of 'institutional bias' in T-levels policy

Dead right Martin. The world of education wants off-the-job theory packages with a memory test at the end. Exactly the opposite of apprenticeships. They want to increase off-the-job elements of apprenticeships, reducing vital on the job learning. Institutionally wrong!

Graham Hoyle, Twitter

## REPLY OF THE WEEK

### Procured funding is unfair to independent training providers



Good points. Also, colleges only having to spend 97 per cent of their AEB grant which means there is no need for them to spend a penny more.

There is absolutely no way the ESFA will put college money into a big AEB melting pot next year. Equally, I don't think you can discriminate against specific organisations and bar them from tendering from the ITP pot. We will have a horrible replay of the last round of AEB procurement where only the ITPs put their contract value in and everybody has the chance to bid for it.

Inevitable result will be wild oversubscription, nobody getting what they want, colleges cashing in again, threats of legal action against the ESFA and *FE Week* selling lots of newspapers.

Tom Ager



## Experts

## MARK DAWE

Chief executive, Association of Employment and Learning Providers



## Let's consider the 'hard choices' that will need to be made as the money runs out

At the AELP conference, delegates were polled on the various proposals to deal with increased level 2 starts, reports Mark Dawe

Owen Farrell would have been proud of Secretary of State Damian Hinds' kick for touch when Robert Halfon, chair of the Commons Education Select Committee, challenged him on Wednesday on whether the apprenticeship levy is doing a good job in supporting the social justice agenda in light of falling apprenticeship starts at level 2.

More level 2 starts will almost certainly mean making "hard choices" about the levy. This was previously discussed with the Department for Education permanent secretary in another Commons committee session earlier in the year. We asked Anne Milton which choice she would make if she was still skills minister after the end of July, when she attended the AELP annual conference on Tuesday.

As *FE Week* reported, Milton floated the possibility of a current salary limit on any would-be apprentice, potentially to reduce the number of higher level apprentices and free up more funding at the lower levels.

Electronic polling of the AELP conference delegates found that only a quarter of them were keen on this idea.

### "One-third thought sector prioritisation was worth exploring"

We have known for some months that in the absence of any increased funding for apprenticeships now or in the Spending Review, everything is on the table as far as hard choices are concerned and that policymakers are busy modelling them. In simple terms, the government is considering age limits, prioritisation of sectors, a cap on levels and/or a salary limit.

If Milton were to stay in post after the change in leadership at Downing Street this summer, she would almost certainly put her red marker pen through any suggestion that apprenticeships should no longer be an all-age programme. She was waxing lyrical again this week on

meeting older workers whose lives had been transformed by going on an apprenticeship.

Prioritisation of sectors takes us to that age-old Whitehall minefield of trying to pick winners when the global economy is changing so rapidly and future jobs are so difficult to predict because of artificial intelligence and automation. Interestingly though, over a third of the AELP conference delegates felt that sector prioritisation was a proposal worth exploring.

The salary cap idea does correlate with the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) and Home Office discussions on limiting the number of migratory workers earning less than £30,000 a year. But it is frankly another minefield and the Home Secretary has reportedly told the MAC to think again. A £30,000 limit on the earnings of an apprentice would, for example, have major implications for the levy spending efforts of the NHS trusts. So unless the limit was raised significantly, we believe that the proposal is probably a non-runner.

This brings us to the question of whether all levels of apprenticeships should be eligible for levy funding. In AELP's Spending Review submission, we make clear that all levels should be supported, even if it requires the levy's scope to be widened or its rate to be increased. Our input into the Augar Review also suggested that the higher education budget should be a contributor to the funding of degree apprenticeships as more universities sign up for the register of apprenticeship training providers.

Some 36 per cent of our conference delegates supported a level cap. This would prevent some apprenticeship levels being publicly funded. So the higher, more expensive levels would have to be funded by other means.

The simple truth is that without a hard choice being made, the money for apprenticeships will soon run out for everyone. Of course a new skills minister might be thinking that this government's apprenticeship policy is an amazing success and we could get even more productivity, social justice and support from business if we found more money to support more apprentices at all levels. Let's not accept a debate that is a negative; we should all join together to fight for the positive.

## ADRIAN ANDERSON

Chief executive, University Vocational Awards Council



## Why a salary cap to limit apprenticeship demand isn't the answer to the overspend

What is the answer to the inevitable overspend of the apprenticeship levy pot? Adrian Anderson has some constructive suggestions

This week, ministers floated the idea of using an eligibility starting salary cap as a way of limiting demand for apprenticeships and thereby preventing an overspend of the apprenticeship levy pot.

The precise impact of such a salary cap on apprenticeship provision would be determined by the level of the salary cap introduced – would it be £25,000, £30,000 or £40,000?

I would suggest that to make a real dent in the predicted overspend of the apprenticeship budget, any cap introduced would have a massive and detrimental impact on the ability of employers to raise productivity and enhance the delivery of public sector services.

Superficially, the idea of stopping employers using the apprenticeship levy to fund a manager on £40,000-£50,000 per annum to undertake an MBA Senior Leaders' Degree Apprenticeship may seem attractive, but let's look at the facts.

Firstly, the government's own industrial strategy makes it clear that poor management skills is a key factor that explains the UK's productivity gap. Surely the government should welcome employers using apprenticeship to raise management skills in line with its own policy? Or is apprenticeship no longer a training programme focused on productivity, but instead a tax on employers (disproportionately paid by the public sector) to fund level 2 training provision for young people let down by the schools system?

We have then the issue of who pays the apprenticeship levy. The biggest levy-payers are predominantly in the public sector. Working with their sponsor departments, the NHS and police forces have developed strategies to use their levy payments to develop the skills of new and existing employees to enhance the delivery and efficiency of public sector services.

An arbitrarily set apprenticeship salary cap could fundamentally undermine such plans and in my view should not be the first funding lever to be pulled. Would the government really tell the NHS that it couldn't use its levy payments to train and develop key nursing, healthcare, clinical and managerial staff if their salaries are above some arbitrary determined pay scale? Don't we want police forces to use their levy payments to

develop the management skills of senior officers to tackle the multitude of challenges they face?

A salary cap would impose a significant constraint on the ability of the NHS, police forces and others to use the payments made by levy payers and paid into their apprenticeship accounts (originally referred to by the government as "their" levy payment) to raise the skills of their employees and the efficiency of public sector services. Any cap would undermine the principle that apprenticeship was an employer-led programme in which employers spent levy payments where they felt they were most needed.

### "Poor management skills is a key factor in the UK's productivity gap"

There is a danger that big levy payers could be forced to use their levy payments on apprenticeships that weren't a priority, or lose them. Let me be a little controversial: should NHS hospitals, police forces and local authorities be enabled to use their levy payments in the way they need to develop their staff to deliver better public services, or is the priority to restrict the ability of these employers so that the levy they pay can be used to fund apprenticeships for employees under the salary cap in, say, business administration or customer service in small private businesses?

So, what is the answer to the inevitable overspend of the apprenticeship levy pot? I'd suggest the answer is straightforward: in line with any concept of joined-up government, prioritisation should be based on the government's own industrial strategy and the need to enhance the delivery of public sector services, as determined by the Department of Health, Home Office and other government departments.

If this means more STEM, management, nursing, healthcare, police and social worker apprenticeships and fewer business administration, customer service and retail apprenticeships, wouldn't this boost the economy and be acceptable to the public?



**A lack of job security in further, adult and prison education is making an army of workers mentally and physically ill – and forcing many to take on a second job to make ends meet, says Andrew Harden**

Staff on insecure contracts working in further, adult and prison education are holding down multiple jobs to make ends meet. Some are even visiting food banks. These revelations are among the findings of a new report by the University and College Union (UCU), published today, which looks into the use of casual contracts in FE and their impact on the staff and students.

We surveyed 798 casualised staff members earlier this year and found that people without secure contracts were unpaid for about a third of their work (30 per cent). The report, *Counting the costs of casualisation in further, adult and prison*, also reveals the toll that a lack of job security has on their mental and physical health.

More than two-thirds of respondents (71 per cent) said they believed their mental health had been damaged by insecure contracts, and almost half (45 per cent) said it had impacted on their physical health.

The report paints a bleak picture of a hand-to-mouth existence where numerous jobs are often needed just to meet basic costs. More than half of respondents (56 per cent) said they had held at least two jobs in the past year.

No matter how many jobs people have, they find that busy and quiet periods are both stressful. The stress that comes with a shortage of hours, and therefore income, around holidays is just of a different kind to the one experienced

## ANDREW HARDEN

Head of further education,  
University and College Union



## Employers say that staff like the flexibility of zero-hours contracts. What rubbish...

when they are forced to accept as many hours as possible. Especially if you don't have enough time or resources to cover long commutes, preparation and marking.

The report rubbishes the claim trotted out by employers that staff like the flexibility offered by zero-hours contracts. Budgeting is tough when you don't know how many hours you will get.

Similarly, it's impossible to plan if hours, and therefore income, are cancelled at short notice – a situation that left one respondent relying on food banks. Nearly three-quarters of respondents (72 per cent) said they had struggled to make ends meet and 56 per cent said they had problems

paying the bills.

Almost all staff on a fixed-term contract (93 per cent) said that they would rather be on a permanent contract and about 72 per cent said they would sacrifice flexibility to secure a job with guaranteed hours.

None of this is good for staff, but it is also extremely damaging for students as staff working conditions are students' learning conditions. Most respondents said they did not have the time to do their jobs properly.

More than four-fifths (83 per cent) said that they did not have enough paid time to prepare adequately for their classes. Similar proportions

complained of insufficient time to get their marking done (84 per cent) and not being able to stay on top of their subjects (85 per cent).

Three-quarters (76 per cent) said they did not have enough time to give their students the feedback they deserved, and many complained that they were not given the same resources as permanent staff, which they said meant their teaching suffered. One said they had no work email address, no desk or workspace and struggled to get simple tasks such as photocopying done.

It's now time to take a proper look at the problem. Ofsted has previously raised concerns that a lack of stability has an impact on the quality of teaching and learning. We want the watchdog to commit to taking a proper look at the negative impact of casualisation on students' education.

**“Most said they didn't have time to do their jobs properly”**

It is not acceptable for colleges to continue to exploit the commitment and professionalism of an army of casual workers who are going the extra mile, sometimes in multiple jobs.

UCU has previously worked with colleges to improve the security of employment for teaching staff, and we will work with any employer willing to engage with us on this issue.

**Youngsters today are likely to have a 50-year career. T-levels can play a major role in equipping them, if we keep certain strategies in mind, says Stephen Evans**

As we wait to find out who will succeed Theresa May, and whether this leads to a changed ministerial team in the Department for Education, one thing that is unlikely to change is the focus on T-levels as a key way to improve skills. How do we make sure they help people in their career aspirations and deliver the skills needs of employers?

The latest report from our Youth Commission, which we set up to consider how to improve education and employment outcomes for young people, shows that young people are likely to have 50-year careers. This means they are likely to change roles a number of times.

**“T-levels need to be both specific, and broad”**

Even if they stay in the same occupation, the skills needed in that occupation are likely to change dramatically. Our report, *Tomorrow's World: Future of the Labour Market*, considers how the labour market is likely to change during young people's working lives, and suggests a number of issues we need to consider in order to make T-levels fit for the future.

Firstly, T-levels need to be both specific, and broad: specific enough to deliver the skills to equip students for their chosen occupational role

## STEPHEN EVANS

Chief executive, the Learning  
and Work Institute



## Four things we can do to make sure that T-levels are not another wasted opportunity

now, and sufficiently broad in content to focus on how young people can adapt to change and build core employability skills in the future.

Secondly, T-levels need to be part of a pathway; it's no good having the best T-levels in the world if there is insufficient progression into them from below level 3, and also pathways from T-levels into more advanced learning.

And we additionally need support for young people who may have done A-levels or other vocational qualifications, but now want to take a different path. We also need to consider how T-levels could or should apply to adults, wanting to update their skills or change careers.

Likewise, place matters too: what about young people living in an area with too few employers to offer an industry placement? We need to find solutions to ensure T-levels deliver across the country.

Third, the qualification needs to be recognised by employers. The government is currently grappling with whether to stop funding other vocational qualifications, such as BTECs, or wait until T-levels are the most popular choice before turning off funding for other qualifications.

Leaving aside that there are some areas that T-levels won't cover, you don't make one qualification more credible by stopping the funding of the ones that are in place already.

The new qualification on the block will be valued by employers once they are convinced that they have equipped young recruits with the skills they need: given the gradual roll-out of T-levels, this will take time.

The fourth point to consider is the help offered to employers. Our research shows that they want to deliver the industry placement element of T-levels, but they are confused by the array of demands from various government departments.

Are T-level industry placements a bigger priority than apprenticeships, work placements, work experience etc? If everything's a priority, then in practice, nothing is.

Finally, we need an overall vision for lifelong learning that sets T-levels in context. The previous decade probably saw too many skills strategies, and it has often felt like a “once in a generation” chance to make things right every few years. But now we have gone to the other extreme of having no strategy.

Strategies are not the answer to everything but, combined with local leadership, they can support a partnership approach with employers that allows prioritisation and coordination. As our report notes, we don't know what all future skills requirements will be, but we do know the core basis and the need to build in flexibility.

T-levels are not a silver bullet and we shouldn't oversell them; there is also a risk that they could follow previous efforts, such as Diplomas, into the lessons of history. But if we work together, set T-levels into the wider context, and work strategically with employers, there is a real opportunity, this time, for things to be different.



## Bulletin

# Movers & Shakers

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



**Stuart Blackett**

Board member, Stockton  
Riverside College Group

Start date June 2019

**Concurrent job**

Director of finance and strategy, RPMI and vice chair of the  
Railway Housing Association

**Interesting fact**

As a child, he was the lead vocalist in a choir and would be paid  
50p per wedding



**Kirk Siderman-Wolter**

Board member, Stockton  
Riverside College Group

Start date June 2019

**Concurrent job**

Interim chief operating officer, Agri-Epi Centre Ltd

**Interesting fact**

He recently won a gold and bronze medal at the Great Britain  
Diving Federation Spring Masters Championships 2019 for  
his age category



**Phil Heathcock**

NETA Training Group board  
member, Stockton Riverside  
College Group

Start date June 2019

**Concurrent job**

Chief financial officer, Cleveland Bridge UK

**Interesting fact**

He carried out an audit of NETA more than 20 years ago

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)

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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

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

**Difficulty: Easy**

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

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



Last Edition's winner: Julie Coverley

## Solutions

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

**Difficulty: Easy**

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

**Difficulty: Medium**

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