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FE WEEK

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2019
EDITION 289



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CRUNCH TIME IN £20M COLLEGE SCANDAL

ESFA TELLS BROOKLANDS COLLEGE CHAIR THEY WANT FUNDING RETURNED

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"THE FE SECTOR HAS
WRONGLY SPENT YEARS
IN THE SHADOW OF HE"

"FOR GAVIN WILLIAMSON
I THINK FE IS A PASSION"

ANNE MILTON, FORMER SKILLS MINISTER

WRITING EXCLUSIVELY FOR *FE WEEK*, THE NEW EDUCATION MINISTER SAYS HE IS "DETERMINED TO PUT FE CENTRE STAGE, AND GIVE IT ALL THE SUPPORT AND CREDIT IT HAS SO LONG DESERVED"

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Over 500 finalists prepare for action at WorldSkills UK LIVE

FRASER WHIELDON
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Five hundred and thirty finalists will be battling it out to see who will be crowned their skill's national champion at WorldSkills UK LIVE this year, it has been announced.

Many of the champions in the past have gone on to compete in Team UK internationally, either at EuroSkills or WorldSkills, which was held most recently this summer in Russia.

Of the 194 organisations – including colleges, employers and military – which are sending competitors, the five sending the most are: New College Lanarkshire, City of Glasgow College, North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College, Pembrokeshire College, and Southern Regional College.

To find out why, FE Week asked each of these colleges to finish this sentence: 'We invest in skills competitions because...'

New College Lanarkshire is

sending the most competitors with 24, and interim principal Annette Bruton answered: "Developing skills is at the heart of everything we do and showcasing this in competition enhances confidence while improving future prospects."

The college has a strong track record in the competitions, finishing in the top three institutions in the last five years – including being named best in UK twice.

City of Glasgow College principal Paul Little, whose college is sending 21 competitors, answered: "I firmly believe these competitions help to improve skills levels and deliver economic growth."

He added: "I am delighted City of Glasgow College is fielding its strongest team yet and we hope, of course, to repeat our past successes."

This is a reference to

WorldSkills LIVE 2018, where the college came back home with four gold, four silver and six bronze medals.

North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College, which is sending 20 competitors, answered the question by saying: "They stretch and motivate staff and learners towards securing higher levels of achievement and progress."

"Participation in competitions not only develops high levels of technical skills, but more importantly develops the core employability skills, which machines will never replace."

"These skills ultimately help our learners to secure great jobs and exciting career opportunities."

The Inclusive Skills competitions at WorldSkills UK LIVE, where competitors with disabilities and learning difficulties can demonstrate their skills, have their roots in North Warwickshire

and South Leicestershire, which they are "proud" of.

Barry Walters, principal of Pembrokeshire College, which is sending 19 competitors, said they invest in the competitions because: "We recognise the value that they bring to the learning experience and the positive impact they have on raising standards."

"Through competing in local, regional and national competitions learners not only get the opportunity to perfect their skills against the best of the best but they also gain so many other skills that will set them apart as they progress into employment or to further their education."

Southern Regional College, which is sending 18 competitors from Northern Ireland, said it invested in skills competitions as they "raise standards, promote excellence in skills, inject ambition and aspiration, build confidence and self-esteem, and provide meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences to learners."

The college runs inter-campus

5 colleges sending the most competitors to WorldSkills UK national finals

Organisation	Competitors
New College Lanarkshire	24
City of Glasgow College	21
North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College	20
Pembrokeshire College	19
Southern Regional College	18

competitions, which lead into selections for regional and national competitions.

WorldSkills UK LIVE is the country's biggest careers event and features national skills competitions in areas like automotive body repair, fine jewellery-making, and carpentry.

WorldSkills UK deputy chief executive Ben Blackledge said: "Not only do WorldSkills UK competitions offer the chance to really recognise and celebrate the excellence at all levels of the skills system, it is also proven way to help young people develop and go further, faster in their training and careers."

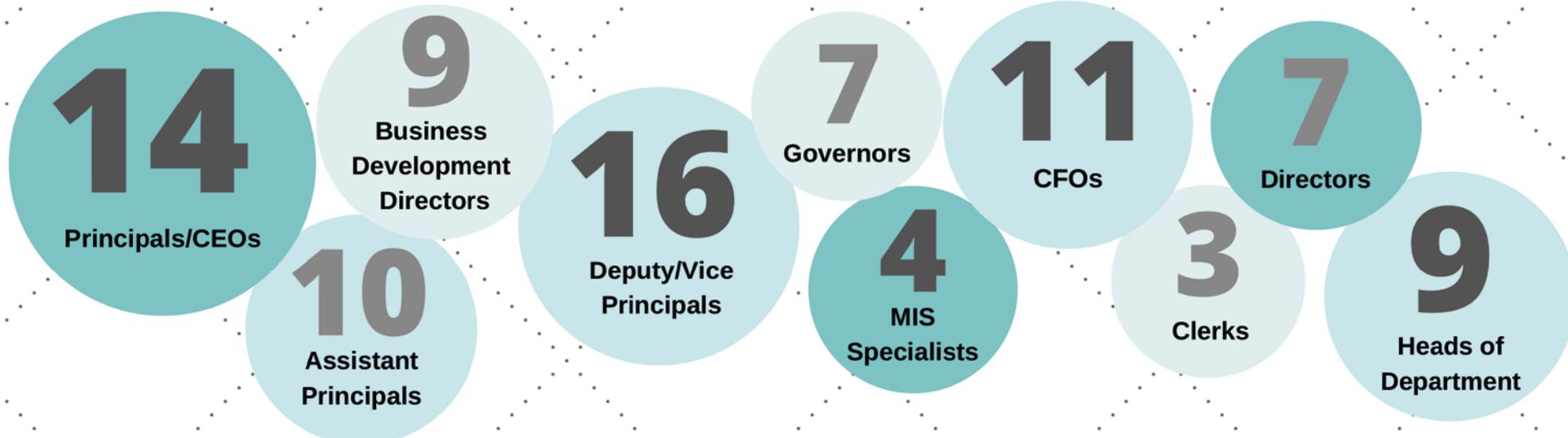
The show for 2019 will run from 21 to 23 November.



Ben Blackledge



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News

Jobs lost as training provider closes amid fraud allegations

FRASER WHIELDON
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Exclusive

An England-based training provider owned by a college in Wales has closed down amid multiple investigations into allegations that learner certificates were falsely claimed for.

A cache of internal emails passed to *FE Week* by a whistleblower appears to reveal staff at Element Skills Training had been claiming certificates for learners when they had not completed their programmes.

Owned by Cardiff and Vale College, Element Skills Training was incorporated in 2016 and provided apprenticeships, functional skills, diplomas and NVQs, operating out of Somerset.

It was closed down by the college over the summer, leading to 20 job losses.

The emails reveal an Element employee was sanctioned by City and Guilds, with a quality assurance report sent to Cardiff and Vale College's principal Kay Martin stating: "One member of staff has been informed by City and Guilds that he will receive a sanction which needs to be addressed as he will no longer be able to assess."



City and Guilds has confirmed they launched an investigation earlier this year after "concerns were raised regarding the provider's assessment processes".

"As we treat any incident that could have an impact on learners very seriously, City and Guilds is undertaking an investigation," a spokesperson said.

"This remains ongoing and as a result we will not be making any further comment at this time."

According to the email cache, the awarding organisation told CAVC and Element to review 1,661 qualifications that were certificated through the two bodies.

The college said City and Guilds has not reclaimed any certificates so far.

In addition to the City and Guilds' investigation, Cardiff and Vale College embarked on its own inquiry into

Element on 28 November.

A letter to the ESFA informing them of the investigation, attached to an email from Martin but which had not been signed, said: "We have identified some discrepancies within Element Skills Training that we need to address through a formal investigation.

"We are not sure of the scale of this, but would seek your support and guidance through this investigation.

"What we can confirm is none of these discrepancies relate to direct ESFA contracts."

The letter also said the college had suspended all new starts and would provide weekly reports of all findings and planned actions.

The ESFA would only say that it does not "routinely comment on investigations ongoing or otherwise".

The emails also appear to show that

earlier this year, Cardiff and Vale College used training provider Safe and Secure to quality assure portfolios from one of Element's courses.

Safe and Secure, the emails show, found work that was in the portfolio file was not signed or dated by the learner or assessor and the work was not of the standard required for the qualification.

"There is a huge amount of work still to do to meet the standards required," an email about Safe and Secure's audit said.

Cardiff and Vale College would not say why it used Safe and Secure to quality assure Element's work.

The managing director of Element Skills Training until near the end of 2018 was Hannah Lloyd, who since working at Element has been a director of several companies: Red Bear Network; The Leadership Team and Seren Skills Network.

Red Bear Network was dissolved last month, while The Leadership Team's managing director, David Kitchen, said Lloyd had worked there as a self-employed consultant since early 2019.

Owing to "family reasons", Lloyd's agreement with The Leadership Team was terminated by mutual consent in July 2019.

Lloyd has not responded to multiple requests for comment from *FE Week*.

The allegations against Element

have come as a "disappointment" to a company which worked with the provider, Wales and West Utilities.

Wales and West Utilities worked with Cardiff and Vale College on delivering its apprenticeship programme. As part of this, Element helped the company access apprenticeship levy funding for apprentices based in England and delivered a small amount of functional skills training for apprentices.

Wales and West Utilities' learning and development manager Theresa Williams insisted that "at no time" were Element Skills Training involved in the certification of apprenticeships or any other gas engineering qualification or accreditation.

"While we have no concerns over the support provided by Cardiff and Vale College, we are disappointed to hear of these allegations and we will be raising this issue with the college directly."

A spokesperson for the college said: "The college made the strategic decision to close Element Skills Training to focus on other provision.

"This is an ongoing process involving working with staff who may be affected. Our main focus is to ensure the small number of learners who have not yet completed their qualification are able to do so.

"As part of normal internal practices regular audits of all activity are undertaken, including investigating any discrepancies in line with awarding and funding body requirements."

It is understood that Element's closure leaves around 20 staff redundant, but Cardiff and Vale College refused to disclose how many learners have been affected.

Recruitment drive as ESFA cracks down on compliance

BILLY CAMDEN
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The Education and Skills Funding Agency is bolstering its compliance and prevention teams amid high-profile cases of provider failure and alleged fraud in the FE sector.

A recruitment drive for almost 30 individuals to work in the agency's provider market oversight division, led by Matthew Atkinson, got underway at the beginning of this month.

The various roles include multiple enforcement officers, investigators, team leaders, funding assurance managers and a head of counter fraud and investigations for colleges and private providers.

It comes shortly after a move to short-notice audits, and is part of the ESFA's crackdown on funding compliance in FE – an issue which is top of the agency's chief executive's list of priorities.

Eileen Milner used her first speech as head of the ESFA, at the Association

of Employment and Learning Providers conference in June 2018, to tell providers that the government's audit and intervention teams were being strengthened to ensure its cash is used "appropriately".

She warned providers they will be investigated and removed from the sector if any misuse of government funds is found.

The advert for "apprenticeship compliance officers" states that the agency is looking for candidates to "help develop a strategy to identify and manage delivery risks; detect, challenge and remedy any non-compliance; provide assurance that agreements are being complied with; and protect apprentices and public investment in the programme".

And the head of counter fraud responsibilities will include "direct reviews into complex cases, analyse and dissect evidence, adding value to the proposed options and make recommendations to resolve cases, including appropriate sanctions and

recovery of public funds".

The ESFA launched its provider market oversight team shortly after Milner joined in November 2017, and it now has around 160 workers.

It came in response, in part, to considerable numbers of untried and untested providers that have hit the market in recent years, for example through the register of apprenticeship training providers.

There have also been a number of high-profile cases of alleged fraud.

Zaaa, one of the country's biggest apprenticeship providers, went bust in October after it was alleged employees had manipulated data to artificially inflate achievement rates by a huge amount, which in turn earned them millions in government funding.

The collapsed provider is currently being

investigated by the police.

Hadlow College became the first to fall under the new college insolvency regime in May. Investigations into financial irregularities at the college are ongoing.

Other FE providers have accidentally fallen foul of the complex data rules they need to abide by.

In March, the principal of Dudley College, Lowell Williams, apologised after it was found the college had been late in recording the withdrawal of numerous apprentices, which also inflated the achievement rate.

An ESFA investigation also found some learners' end dates were inaccurate. The college had to give the government back over £500,000 as a result.

In July it was revealed that colleges and training providers will be given as little as two weeks' notice of a financial

assurance audit and only three days to present sample files.

The visits can take place at any time of year. Previously providers were notified in June or July if they were to be visited in September.

And where before, providers had between five and ten days to prepare a selected sample of individual learner files, the ESFA will now give them between three and five days.

FE Week also understands that while the auditing only used to cover last year's data and clawback from last year, this has been extended to include data from three years previously.

Elements of this new regime chime with the controversial mystery audits the ESFA carried out on a number of providers earlier this year, where hundreds of documents from as far back as 2015/16 had to be handed over within two days.

When asked about the roles in its provider market oversight team, the ESFA said it would provide more information in "due course".



Eileen Milner

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News

Milton reflects on her time as skills minister

BILLY CAMDEN

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Exclusive

Anne Milton's tenure as apprenticeships and skills minister came to an abrupt end on 23 July when she resigned just minutes after giving evidence to the Parliamentary education select committee.

She's often described the role as "the best job in government", but it was her "grave concerns" about leaving the EU without a Brexit deal that led to her decision to return to the backbenches.

Milton took on the skills brief at the Department for Education

just over two years ago after Robert Halfon was sacked, and is now known as a strong champion of FE.

FE Week caught up with to discuss her time in office, and what she makes of prime minister Boris Johnson's controversial decision to not appoint a skills minister successor.

"It is without doubt the best job in government," she says.

"You get to meet young and older people who still may have not found what they want to do, never discovered what they were capable of doing at school, and you see people of all ages reborn, if you like, with training from a college or apprenticeship.

"It is very inspiring. It is often quite moving to hear those stories."

"For Gavin Williamson I think FE is a passion, him taking on the brief I am very happy"

Milton says it was therefore a "very tough decision" to resign from a post that she "really enjoyed", and one that has "real meaning".

She adds that she has "no regrets" from her two-year tenure, but very many highlights.

Asked for her top three highlights she says the first is the development of T-levels, work that she is "really

proud of".

"It is not easy to develop a new qualification, even if it is a new qualification that has a very clear purpose.

"I think the DfE made immense progress and did a fantastic job. I look forward to those coming online."

Her second highlight is "raising the profile of apprenticeships".

"In 2017 the levy had just come in and there was a lot of anger from business," Milton explains.

"As business has taken on board the fact that from now there will be no changes to the levy, the negative noise has decreased so the reputation of apprenticeships has gone up.

"You start to get organisations like Airbus and Google and Microsoft and Deloitte doing apprenticeships, and that has really raised the status of apprenticeships and made it a real option not only for people who can't get into university but an active choice for those that can."

Her third highlight was having the chance to visit various FE colleges.

"Much of the public do not know what goes on in colleges and they are all very different, but it is phenomenal what they are doing," Milton says.

"I'm pleased that by the time I left both the Love Our Colleges and Raise the Rate campaign have really got some traction amongst members of parliament."

Just weeks after Milton resigned, Johnson announced a £400 million funding boost for further education, which included raising the FE base rate for first time since 2013 to £4,188.

But considering Raise the Rate was asking for an increase to £4,760 per sixth former, is the increase enough?

"I would like to see it be more," Milton says.

"Government has to balance the books, there isn't a never-ending pot of money and it is maybe about rebalancing some of the funding. I think if we really believe in FE being a real option then the money has to follow the words."

Moving onto Johnson's decision not to appoint a dedicated skills minister as her replacement, and instead having the education secretary lead on the brief with support from other ministers, Milton says she believes it is a good idea.

"For Gavin Williamson I think FE is a passion, him taking on the brief I am

very happy with that"

However, she warned the role requires "a lot of work" and fears that site visits to colleges and providers could be squeezed as a result.

The DfE appears to have recognised the workload pressures of the role, and now has three ministers splitting the FE brief, led by Williamson (see story

below).

Milton uses her final words on FE to thank the "hundreds of people I have met in my two years as skills minister".

"I have never met a more inspiring bunch of teachers, young people and older people. Carry on doing what you do very well."

Milton was one of 21 Conservatives

who voted against Johnson in last week's key Brexit vote.

Currently sitting as an independent after losing the Tory whip, she says she's mulling over whether to stand as an MP at the next election.

"My father told me that time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted, so that's what I am doing."

Meet the FE Commissioner's new cost-cutting boss

BILLY CAMDEN

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Controversial minister Lord Agnew has been given responsibility for a new college financial warning system, as well as oversight of the FE Commissioner's office.

The unpaid minister for the school system has from today taken on the FE "provider market, including quality and improvement" and this afternoon the Department for Education confirmed this includes a new financial modelling programme as well as the college intervention regime.

He will also lead on EU exit preparation, delivery of the careers strategy, and safeguarding in schools and post-16 providers.

Agnew is a venture capitalist who made much of his fortune outsourcing jobs to India. He is a former DfE non-executive board member who founded the Inspiration Trust chain of academies.

He's become controversial in the schools sector owing to his cost-cutting ideas, and criticised for his insistence that schools can continue to save money on back-office spending, when many headteachers warn their budgets are already cut to the bone.

In November 2018 he told a conference he would bet any headteacher "a bottle of champagne and a letter of commendation" that he can identify more potential savings in their schools.

At the same conference he reportedly claimed that school resource management advisers, who were parachuted into schools under a trial scheme in 2017 to help them cut costs, found £35 million of "essentially misdirected resources" at 72 schools and academy trusts, which amounted to a "colossal sum of money".

He has since extended the trial with £2.3 million extra funding to provide at least 160 advisers.

In March this year, FE Week's sister paper Schools Week revealed how Agnew's cost-cutting consultants told a school to replace experienced teachers with support staff on term-time contracts, while another was urged to limit lunch portions for pupils.

One FE job that has already fallen on Agnew's lap is a new early warning system for college finances.

Announced on Thursday, the Education and Skills Funding Agency said college financial returns will be consolidated into a single annual return from January 2020.

Providers have historically submitted their financial returns at least twice a year.

The ESFA claimed this will help college governors, and the agency, "spot signs of declining financial health and ensure preventative action can be taken at an earlier stage", but is yet to specify exactly how this will be the case.

Principals are unconvinced. In reaction to the announcement, Ian Pryce, chief executive of Bedford College, tweeted: "You don't wait until you hear the football results and learn your team lost 10-0 as a basis for preventing problems and poor performance. You spot things early by developing strong human relationships.

"I find this very disappointing especially if this is what college finance directors think."

And Chris Todd, principal at Derwentside College, said: "Cash flow is often the issue and an annual return won't help identify cash flow deterioration quickly enough."

The move comes just weeks after the ESFA announced that Dame Mary Ney would lead a review into the way the government



monitors college finances, including the role of the FE Commissioner, and less than a month after the National Audit Office said they were also preparing to launch a value-for-money review on the management of colleges' financial sustainability.

Agnew is the third minister to take on an FE brief in Boris Johnson's new government, after the prime minister failed to appoint a dedicated skills minister in his reshuffle when Anne Milton resigned.

Education secretary Gavin Williamson is taking the lead, while children and families minister Kemi Badenoch is offering support.

Badenoch, however, has now gone on maternity leave and had her responsibilities taken over by Michelle Donelan in the interim.

Donelan will support Williamson, including in areas such as the delivery of T-levels, apprenticeships and adult education.

She remains a government whip, taking on the role at the DfE on an unpaid basis for the duration of Badenoch's maternity leave.

She was previously a member of the education select committee between July 2015 and October 2018.

Michelle Donelan



The FE and skills sector has for too long existed in the shadow of higher education, says Gavin Williamson, the new education secretary. He explains why he wants to bring it out into the light so that every student has the opportunity to benefit from the same quality of education he had

When I was appointed education secretary in July, one of the first things I did was take charge of the further education and skills brief, the first secretary of state at this department to do so.

I was a student at an FE college in Scarborough, so I know first-hand how the sector opens doors to every kind of career imaginable. I want young people to share the same self-belief that they can achieve whatever they like, no matter what course they take.

That's why I fought so hard to make sure that this month's bumper funding package for schools and colleges included £400 million of additional funding for providers of 16-19 education, plus £100 million for FE pensions.

It's the single biggest annual increase for the sector since 2010, and includes £120 million to help to deliver more expensive but crucial subjects such as engineering.

This isn't just a personal mission for me. It's a practical one. For too long, technical and vocational education has played second fiddle to more traditional academic routes.

That's outdated, short-sighted, and means we lag behind other advanced economies when it comes to developing a highly skilled and productive future workforce.

Contrary to long-held dogma, a purely academic education isn't the right route for

GAVIN WILLIAMSON

Education secretary



It's time for FE to stop playing second fiddle and move to centre-stage

everyone. The country knows this. The people I grew up with in Yorkshire know this. My West Midlands constituents know this, and I'm certain that FE leaders and teachers know it.

That's why I'm so keen to throw my support behind vocational and technical alternatives such as T-levels. When they're rolled out from next year, a single T-level will officially count for three of our world class A-levels in terms of UCAS points – solid proof that technical and academic educations finally have equitable status.

This government is also supporting

thousands of apprenticeships. A few weeks ago I met with some of Royal Mail's 460 apprentices in Leeds – people of all ages and backgrounds getting stuck into quality training programmes ranging from high-tech robotics to project management.

As with all apprenticeships, it's a win-win situation: young people are priming themselves for brilliant, well-paid careers while helping our country's companies build the skilled workforce we need for a productive modern economy.

None of these efforts would amount to

anything, though, without the dedication and passion of this country's FE workforce. I made it through my A-level in history thanks in large part to Scarborough Sixth Form College's husband-wife dream team, Mr and Mrs Johnson. Today, similarly devoted teachers are tirelessly guiding young people through their post-16 education.

“This isn't just a personal mission. It's a practical one”

I've seen it myself. Over the past few weeks I've been up and down the country – to Leeds, Sheffield and Westminster Kingsway College in London, where I met Team UK before they headed to the Skills Olympics in Russia.

I was in the company of some of the most skilled young people in the world, like Tonicha Roberts, 22, whose specialist skill is chemical laboratory technology, and master carpenter Jack Goodrum. Each of those competitors is testament to the hard work and high-quality training offered daily by the FE workforce.

I want to do everything I can to support that workforce, which is why this month's funding boost included £20 million to help recruit and retain teachers and leaders in the sector, and to ensure that people taking T-levels are getting the cream of the vocational teaching crop.

It's an exciting time for FE. You have in me an education secretary who's determined to put it centre stage, and give it all the support and credit it has so long deserved.

Williamson's bold claims of putting FE centre stage will be held to account – and what about adult learning?

FRASER WHIELDON
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Exclusive

Sector leaders will be holding Gavin Williamson's feet to the fire after he wrote in *FE Week* he is “determined to put FE centre stage”.

The new education secretary's words come after a flurry of sector activity by the government, including a £400 million funding boost and the awarding of FE portfolios to Michelle Donelan and Lord Agnew.

Sixth Form Colleges Association chief executive Bill Watkin said: “We are delighted to have a secretary of state in Gavin Williamson who is so committed to raising the profile of 16 to 19 education.

“His plan to Raise the Rate next year is an important statement of intent and shows that his support for the sector goes beyond warm words.”

Raise the Rate is a campaign spearheaded by the association to increase the funding baseline for learners aged 16 to 18 from £4,000 per year, to £4,760.

However, the £400 million will only raise the baseline to £4,188, from August next year.

Watkin continued: “Both Gavin and Michelle Donelan are former sixth form college students who have first-hand experience of how the sector can transform lives.

“For too long, 16-19 education in all its forms – academic, applied general and technical – has been overshadowed by pre-16 and higher education.”

Watkin has not taken his eyes off securing more funding though, saying: “We now have a secretary of state who is ideally placed to give the pivotal stage of further education the investment, profile and attention that it deserves.”

Since being appointed, Williamson

has been conducting multiple visits to colleges, including to Westminster Kingsway to meet Team UK before WorldSkills 2019; and to Leeds City College to open a new £60 million building.

And it has made an impression on the Association of Colleges chief executive David Hughes, who said: “I am delighted the secretary of state is taking personal responsibility for further education and colleges – already we have seen the fruits of that, with the £400 million pledge last week from the chancellor.”

Upon reading Williamson's promise to give FE “all the support and credit it has so long deserved”, Hughes added: “It is widely accepted colleges have been neglected in funding and policy terms for the last decade or more and our #LoveOurColleges campaign has been an important part in changing that.”

#LoveOurColleges, much like Raise

the Rate, is looking to increase the baseline – but up to £5,000.

“Gavin Williamson has shown how much he values colleges and the role they play in the wider education system,” Hughes said.

“We will work closely with him to ensure that next year's spending review builds on that with a long term and proper funding settlement.”

However, one area of the sector snubbed by the chancellor in the Spending Review and missing from the education secretary's trip schedule is adult education.

Sue Pember, former director of FE at the Department for Education and now director of policy at adult education network HOLEX, said: “We welcome Gavin Williamson's enthusiasm for FE as long as he realises that FE is not all about 16 to 19, but also covers adult learning and all levels of educational ability.

“One of his first priorities must be to build a progression ladder from

pre-entry through to level 2. The lack of interest and investment in these fundamental building blocks is inadequate and must be urgently addressed.”

But on the other hand, Association of Employment and Learning Providers chief executive Mark Dawe said it was “wonderful” to see Williamson describe apprenticeships as a “win-win” for the employer and the young person in his op-ed for *FE Week*.

“In a nutshell, he has identified why the programme is so popular and AELP wants to work with him and his team to ensure that all employers have the opportunity to take advantage of our fantastic flagship skills programme.”

Dawe also praised Williamson's meeting with Team UK, saying: “The ambition should be to embed the teaching of world-beating standards into all technical and vocational education which takes place in this country.”

Interview

The numbers man who's air

BILLY CAMDEN
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Exclusive

Simon Connell, the new chief executive of the Baker Dearing Trust, is on a mission to change perceptions of university technical colleges, he tells Billy Camden

Things are changing at the organisation that runs university technical colleges.

The Baker Dearing Trust's new chief executive Simon Connell is determined that it will move from "quantity to quality" with no more of the 14 to 19 providers opening anytime soon. Instead, he says, it will "consolidate" after nearly ten years of "high growth".

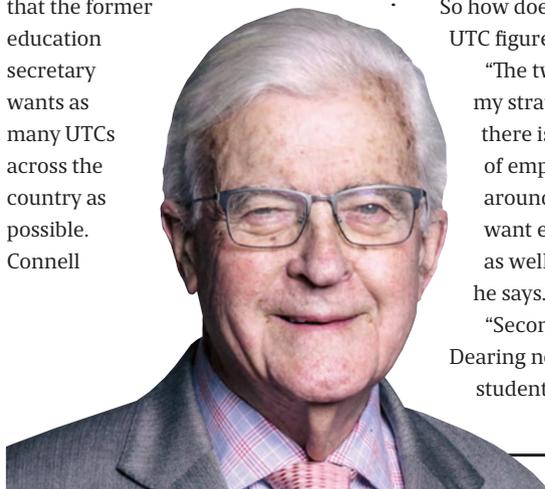
"I want people to talk about UTCs like they do about the Russell Group"

Connell, 48, took over the top position this summer from Charles Parker, who led the trust since its incorporation in 2010.

He is under no illusion that UTCs have continued to struggle and a big push is needed to get their quality and student numbers "right" to improve the programme's reputation and win people over.

He says there aren't many things that he and the scheme's architect Lord Baker have a difference of opinion on, but the "size of growth for the programme in the short term" is one of them.

It is well-known that the former education secretary wants as many UTCs across the country as possible. Connell



Lord Kenneth Baker

says his focus will, however, be on filling existing colleges over the next three years.

"It would be a shame to lose complete momentum in the programme by not having any new openings, but we need to get capacity up significantly from where it is at the moment – and at the same time improve the perception of the programme.

"I want the education secretary and others to talk about our group of schools in glowing terms, in the way they do about leading educational establishments, such as the Russell Group universities. I want everyone to be impressed with what we do and that has to be the focus."

Forty-eight UTCs are now open, a number that will be the same this time next year when Doncaster UTC opens after being in the pipeline for years, but South Wiltshire UTC closes – the eleventh to shut.

Dwindling learner numbers persist at most UTCs: FE Week analysis of data on the government's "Get information about schools" website shows that numbers fell in nearly half (43 per cent) from 2018 to 2019.

And the average number of learners across all UTCs sits at 282 (46 per cent) for 2019 against an average capacity of 615.

Ofsted performance is, at least, slowly improving. Of the 16 UTC inspections in 2018-19, 11 (69 per cent) were "good" or better. But overall just 59 per cent of all inspected UTCs currently sit among the higher two grades – nearly 20 percentage points lower than general FE colleges in 2017-18.

Connell is a numbers man. He has a double first in maths from the University of Cambridge and has spent most of his career in London working for big investment banks such as Merrill Lynch.

So how does he plan to improve UTC figures?

"The two big thrusts of my strategy are to ensure there is a uniform standard of employer engagement around the programme – I want every UTC to be doing as well as the top third are," he says.

"Second is that Baker Dearing needs to be promoting student stories.



Simon Connell

"Often they don't start at a good place when joining the UTC, but they come out the other end a really well-rounded highly valuable member of society. And they're employable, that is critical."

He believes that Ofsted ratings will only get better as the watchdog's new inspection framework will focus on the quality of education rather than "teaching to the test".

"Over the next couple of years that will filter through to local community perception and that will help to grow student numbers."

Looking back on the Baker Dearing Trust, Connell says there perhaps was

a "little bit" of a view that it is "UTCs or nothing".

"We don't want to be fighting MATs, we want to be working with them"

"If we can win over the system by raising our game and integrating a little bit better with everybody

else, then we have that platform for growing as we'll have more supporters."

One way that UTCs have begun integrating is through joining multi-academy trusts, a move that Lord Baker once said would "water down" the programme.

"Are MATs part of the solution? Yes," Connell says, adding that half of UTCs are now part of trusts.

"One thing we didn't expect when we launched this movement ten years ago was how hostile local schools would be to UTCs.

"There are three reasons for that: money, a focus on results and a land

Struggling to fill UTC classrooms

grab where MATs have wanted to control their local area. If that is the way it is, we don't want to be fighting them, we want to be working with them."

Connell is also open to UTCs changing the 14 to 19 student age range. It could be a "pragmatic" solution to those technical colleges that have struggled to recruit, he says.

"The way I think about value for money is return on investment"

But his analysis shows that it is not the starting age that determines whether a UTC is full. "If you're in a reasonably populated area, have a good education defined by Ofsted and you have a distinct proposition with

good employer engagement and great project based learning, you are going to be close to full whether you start at 14 or 11."

However, he says it is "really important" to use "UTC" in the names of the technical colleges.

"Those that have taken it out, we want to change that," he says. We want them to be proud of being a UTC."

In November 2017 UTC Cambridge rebranded as the Cambridge Academy for Science and Technology after joining Parkside Federation Academies, a multi-academy trust. And in May last year Sir Charles Kao UTC changed to the BMAT STEM Academy when it joined the Burnt Mill Academy Trust.

Connell says these decisions haven't "damaged relationships" between the colleges and Baker Dearing, but "success will come when they call us up and say 'we were wrong to do this'".

Many education leaders have made their views known on the UTC programme: they think it little more

than Lord Baker's vanity project that has wasted millions of taxpayers' money as a result of government bailouts and rebrokerage costs to MATs.

"Education needs to keep pace with the fourth industrial revolution"

Does Connell believe they provide value for money?

"The way I think about value for money is the return on investment," he says.

"What we have to show is that young people who go to UTCs, if that provision of education costs more, then down the line there needs to be a larger payback to society – the reality

OFSTED GRADES FOR ALL INSPECTED UTCS

Ofsted grade	Number	% of total inspected
Outstanding	2	6
Good	19	53
Requires Improvement	12	33
Inadequate	3	8

is it too early to say.

"Our education system needs to keep pace with the fourth industrial revolution and we need to invest in our core business, that's a fact of economics. Investment costs more,

so I think it is right and proper that the government supports the UTC programme. But it is also right that Baker Dearing works hard with UTCs to ensure taxpayer money is wisely spent."

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News

The government's announcement of extra funding for FE is welcome, but the sector must ensure it is invested sustainably, says Richard Atkins as he sets out his office's three key priorities for the new academic year

With everyone else in the sector, I was very pleased to read about the significant increase in FE funding in last week's spending review. While using resources well is critical, ultimately the level of funding underpins our ability to employ excellent teachers and deliver for our students.

Within the Department for Education, there is real optimism about the future opportunities for colleges. Our new secretary of state is clear that improving technical education is an overriding priority for him. As a huge believer in the transformative effect of FE on the lives of learners, I welcome this renewed focus.

I and my FEC team are expecting another busy year supporting individual colleges to develop a sustainable and successful sector. My team now has three roles – to support colleges in improving to good and outstanding; to engage where there is a risk of failure either on quality or financial health; and to support ministers in feeding practitioner insight into policy-making.

“Colleges must be honest about problems and open about risks”

We have recently taken big steps in the first area. The 80 colleges that participated in the recent Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) programme have reported that it helped them to boost the quality of teaching and learning and encouraged meaningful collaboration that would not have happened otherwise. They have also raised aspirations and supported college-wide improvements in culture and leadership.

RICHARD ATKINS CBE

The FE Commissioner



And now for the good news: a renewed focus on our sector

We have been supported in this work by outstanding sector leaders. National leaders of FE colleges (NLFs) and national leaders of governance (NLGs) are in place to offer mentoring, encouragement and share best practice. We have received very positive feedback about their work. We will be recruiting further leaders this term and I want to encourage experienced chief executives/principals and chairs of good or outstanding colleges to apply. As a sector, it is essential that we learn from each other.

The second area of work for my team is to visit colleges where risks have been identified, often following an Ofsted assessment or an analysis by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). I have also been pleased to see increasing numbers of colleges approaching us proactively, as leaders recognise that they need support.

Most frequently I and my team undertake a diagnostic assessment of the college's strategy for improvement. We visited 33 colleges last year in this role. These visits usually produce supportive recommendations and enable colleges to access a wider range of advice – including NLFs and NLGs. We conduct fewer of the more serious full

intervention assessments than we do diagnostics; critical failures occur where leadership teams have allowed problems to fester and become crises.

Common factors lead to intervention, such as the lack of a sustainable, costed curriculum plan. There is a belief that problems can be put off by selling an asset, expecting that the college will secure an increased share of the learner market next year, or that funding rates will significantly increase. In some cases, there are hopes that entering a new or novel type of provision will bring in income.

The announcement around funding is welcome, and it will achieve most impact if it is invested as part of a costed curriculum plan within a sustainable long-term structure, not as a way of putting off necessary decisions. Colleges must be honest about problems and open about risks. Your local ESFA team, the FE commissioner team, NLFs and NLGs are all there to help and work with you.

The new FE insolvency regime has been introduced and used for the first time this year. The objective is to protect learners and enable smooth transitions. My team has been heavily

involved in the first case, working closely with the ESFA and the administrator, and our experience is that it will achieve these.

Nonetheless, it is an intensive, costly process, and the objective must be for colleges not to need it. In 2018-19 my team was involved in 20 solvent structural changes. An encouraging and increasing number of colleges have recognised that the best way to secure high-quality provision for learners is to have a facilitated structure and prospects appraisal (SPA), where my team can work with existing leadership to identify the best solution.

The third aspect of my role is to feed practitioner insight into policy. I chair the Principals Reference Group – seven of the most experienced and successful principals in the sector, selected through an open process – and the College Improvement Board, made up of a mix of senior civil servants and college principals/chief executives. Both of these boards have a role in feeding user insight into policy development. I am encouraged that the department shares thinking early and is keen to get expert input to ensure effective implementation.

Our own FEC team has just recruited three recent and experienced FE leaders to join us. Martin Sim has joined as a deputy FE commissioner, whilst Laraine Smith and Nigel Duncan will take up FE adviser roles. They replace John Hogg, Lynne Craig and Phil Frier who all stood down in July after five years' excellent work.

I hope that your college has a stable, enjoyable and successful year. Colleges remain brilliant places to work because you are transforming the life chances of your learners every day. Creating a good or outstanding college while managing tight budgets requires governance and leadership of the highest quality, sometimes helped by a little luck! If your college is facing challenges, help is available and it is better to approach other colleges, the regulator or ourselves rather than hope that heroic leadership will carry you through.

College area review programme outcomes in numbers

This week the Department for Education published an 'area review: end of programme report'. The area reviews took place between September 2015 and March 2017 across England.

Supported by the FE Commissioner's office, these "locally led" reviews resulted in hundreds of recommendations, many mergers and hundreds of millions of pounds of restructuring funds.

The report says it is not an evaluation of the programme and it is "too early to assess the true impact of the area review programme on the FE sector, in particular the impact of mergers on both the financial health and quality of the colleges".

The DfE has said they intend to publish an evaluation report in 2022.

Here are some of the key facts from the report.

37
locally led
area reviews

376
area review
recommendations

57
mergers

3
federations

3 joint FE
and HE
institutions

23
academy
conversions

£432.6m
restructuring
funds

46
restructuring
fund recipients

£11.42m
transition
grant

157
transition
grants

FE colleges
reduced from
241 to 193

Sixth form college
reduced from
93 to 54



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News

Commission wants 'demoralising' GCSE English replaced with new qualification

FRASER WHIELDON
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A new Passport in English qualification would "bury" the "worthless" resit industry, the chair of a major commission has said after they recommended scrapping GCSE English language.

The Forgotten Third commission, which was launched by the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), suggests learners should sit the 'Passport in English' instead of GCSE English language between the ages of 15 and 18.

Consisting of online assessment, a portfolio of a student's writing and a significant spoken English component, the qualification would have various stages, from "entry level to operational proficiency to expert" for each skill area of reading, writing, and speaking and listening, which would be taken when a learner was ready.

Speaking to *FE Week*, commission chair Roy Blatchford said: "We decided to reject tinkering with GCSE English, and the same for maths, and to take English and maths out of that system of comparable outcomes, which is no longer fit for purpose.

"The passport would be a series of assessments which would be taken over time between 15 and 18 and importantly would bury the resit industry, which I think, by common consent from talking to FE principals, is not worth doing."

There are other options to GCSE English language currently out there: reformed functional skills qualifications in English and maths are available across five levels of qualification for young people aged 16 to 19.

Pressed on how the passport would improve upon functional skills, Blatchford was vague, but did say he saw functional skills as "something else and has always been there for those who get grade two".

"Whereas we're saying this passport is something that all students will do," he added. "It's not superior or inferior, just very different."

Functional skills has supporters in the sector, such as the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, and chief executive Mark Dawe said: "ASCL are spot on with identifying the problem.

"However, we don't think that we should be introducing any more possible confusion for employers.

"Functional skills are a strengthened

and well-respected alternative and we would like to work with ASCL to ensure that this is the preferred solution to the concerns raised."

The current comparable outcomes system, whereby the spread of GCSE grades is pegged to what cohorts of similar ability achieved in the past, leads to around a third of learners failing to achieve a 'standard pass' – grade 4 – in English language every year, according to the commission.

In line with the Department for Education's condition of funding rule, all 16 to 19 students who have achieved a grade 3 in English or maths are required to retake the subject until they pass, while those with a grade 2 or lower have the option of taking the reformed functional skills qualifications instead.

Chief executive of the Association of Colleges David Hughes said the "failure" of such learners is "pointless and avoidable", and "stage, not age" should determine a student's ability to gain a qualification.

The commission has suggested, as a means of testing each skill area, an online assessment for reading; an interview with someone from the business world for speaking and listening; and a task involving collating



Roy Blatchford

information from articles for the writing test, much as is done in the A-level English language exam.

The commission has also suggested a companion 'Passport in Maths' qualification.

But this could all be for naught, as the DfE has today said the education secretary has promised not to change the national curriculum.

A spokesperson said: "We have dramatically reformed GCSEs over the past five years to ensure young people are leaving school ready for the world of work, while also adapting functional skills qualifications, including English, to better meet students' needs post-16 and ensure they have a strong grasp of essential skills like reading, writing and maths."

Providers urge ESFA to U-turn on plans to collect delivered off-the-job training hours

BILLY CAMDEN
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The Association of Employment and Learning Providers is lobbying government to U-turn on its proposal to introduce yet another data field for logging apprentices' off-the-job training hours.

Last week the Education and Skills Funding Agency said a mandatory "off-the-job training – actual hours" data field would be added to individual learner records (ILR) from 2020/21, subject to consultation.

It comes after officials announced in May that from the 2019/20 academic year, a new mandatory field in the ILR would be added that requires providers to record "planned" off-the-job hours.

The requirements follow high-profile concern from the National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee about non-compliance with the unpopular

rule going unchallenged.

But providers have reacted angrily. After *FE Week* reported the latest announcement on Friday, Jill Whittaker, the managing director of HIT Training, tweeted: "As an employer I am disappointed that the ESFA don't trust my award winning organisation to give my #apprentices the right amount of training, as a #training #provider I'm irritated that the @ESFAGov see timesheets as a proxy for #quality."

Tony Holloway, the operations director at Qube Learning, said it is another "bureaucratic rule that focuses on administration not quality".

"The reason the industry is so split is because across the board rules aren't suitable," he added. "Some qualifications require more and some less. Where is the funding for the extra administration burden?"

The AELP is now urging the ESFA to reconsider.

"Data fields for 2020/21

were published this week – and surprise surprise the ESFA now want actual off-the-job hours," the association's chief executive Mark Dawe told his members on Thursday.

"We warned this would happen when it was optional recording of hours – and here we now are. Total waste of time, probably allows one stat to be provided showing actual hours delivered in apprenticeships and totally misses the point of apprenticeships.

"We will not let this one drop – all it does is introduce bureaucracy and cost for the provider and, more importantly, the employer – another nail in the employer-led coffin."

The extra data field for 2020/21 would "enable visibility of actual training delivered", the ESFA said.

It is unclear whether the "actual hours" field

would need to be updated by providers every month, or whether the figure would need to be input at the end of each apprenticeship programme.

Further details will soon be posted to the feconnect forum and open for comments until September 20, the ESFA said.

The ESFA previously said the mandatory field for logging planned hours will "help demonstrate compliance with the funding rules".

In March the National Audit Office said in its apprenticeships progress report that the ESFA, in summer 2018, had just one "red risk" associated with delivery of the programme – that apprentices do not spend at least 20 per cent of their time doing off-the-job training.

The government's spending watchdog warned that the agency has "limited assurance" in knowing whether the policy is being abided by, as even though audits may identify problems, there is

"scope for providers to under-deliver for some time without this being picked up".

"This is an important gap in oversight, because the provider continues to be paid as long as the apprentice remains on the programme," its report said.

Meg Hillier, the chair of the influential Public Accounts Committee, added that it was "concerning that the ESFA can't be sure that apprentices are spending enough time on off-the-job training".

The new mandatory ILR fields have therefore been introduced to mitigate the problem.

Deputy chief executive of the Association of Colleges Julian Gravatt said: "We understand the concerns of MPs about monitoring but we're not convinced that loading more bureaucracy on colleges and training providers is the right reaction.

"The ILR specification is already 50 per cent longer than it was ten years ago and money spent on data collection isn't available for anything else."



Mark Dawe

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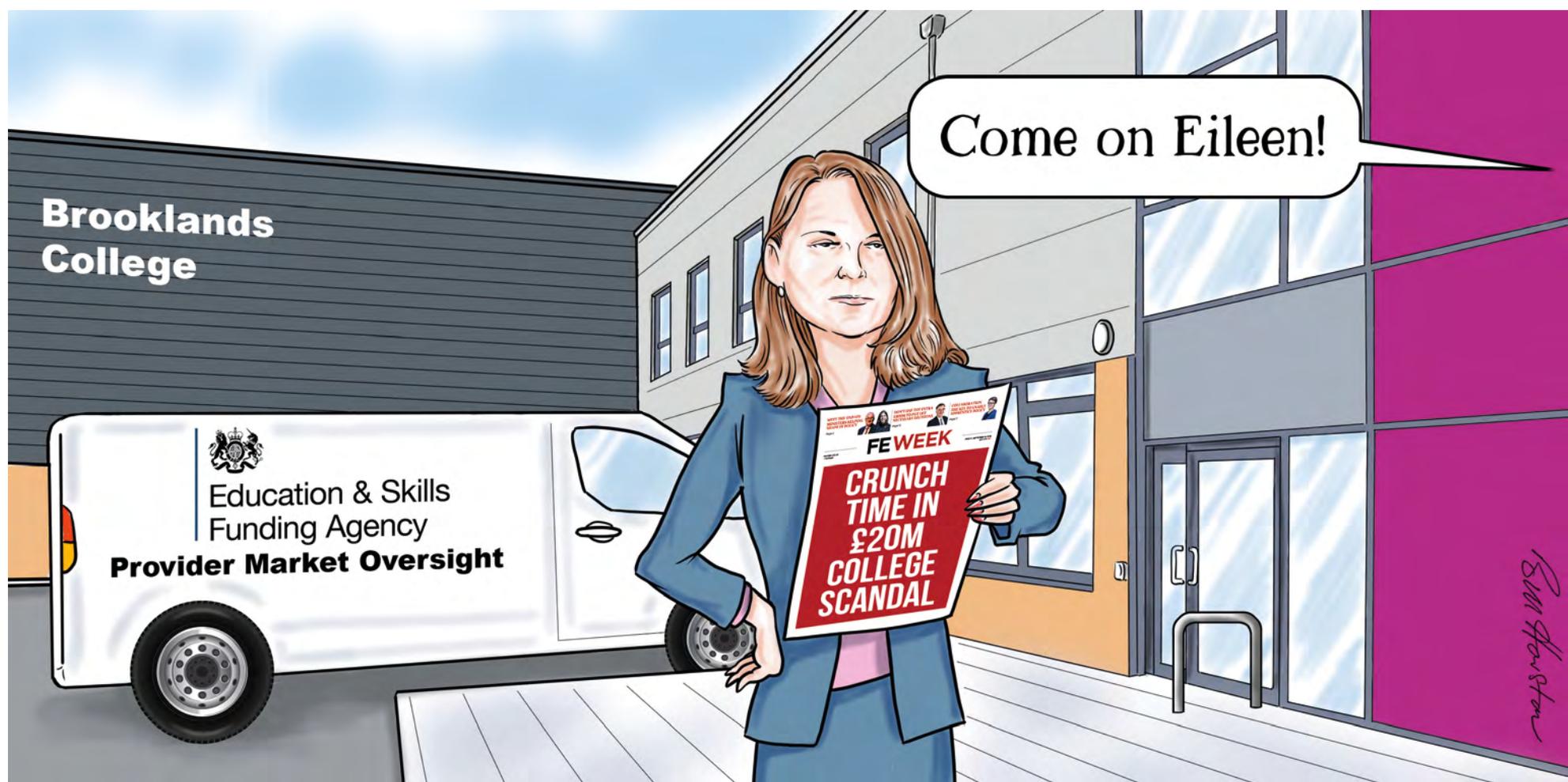
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News



Brooklands future in the balance in £20m apprenticeship subcontracting scandal

BILLY CAMDEN
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Exclusive

A college's future is in doubt after officials demanded it pays up to £20 million back to the government following investigations into a major subcontracting scandal, *FE Week* can reveal.

Brooklands College has been told to pay the funding clawback owing to its dealings with mysterious training firm SCL Security Ltd, owned by Andrew Merritt.

The pair have been involved in multi-million pound subcontracting deals for years whereby SCL Security supposedly trained hundreds of apprentices, mostly aged 16 to 18.

Questions began to mount over the arrangement when, in November 2018, *FE Week* discovered the subcontractor employed fewer than 10 staff and no evidence could be found that the courses were advertised, who the apprentices at SCL Security were, or where it trained them.

Merritt and the college repeatedly refused to share this information despite numerous requests from this

newspaper.

Once the Education and Skills Funding Agency's boss Eileen Milner became aware she launched one of the agency's biggest ever investigations, hiring three different audit firms to conduct simultaneous inquiries of different organisations involved in the subcontracting arrangement.

Apprenticeship starts were suspended at SCL Security while inquiries were made.

FE Week can now reveal that amongst many findings, the ESFA investigation discovered that the apprenticeship funding was being used to pay the wages for the 16 to 18-year-olds, which is very clearly not permitted in the agency's funding rules.

“Merritt and the college repeatedly refused to share this information”

It is understood that a recruitment agency called Workforce Staffing Ltd, part of Workforce Solutions Group Limited which is headed up by two brothers – Paul and Joe Alekna – who

were at the centre of an *FE Week* exposé in 2016, were involved in this.

As a result, the auditors view up to £20 million of ESFA funding to be at risk.

Brooklands College said it was unable to comment on “confidential details” about the ongoing ESFA investigations.

“We continue to work closely with the ESFA Territorial team and have an excellent working relationship,” a spokesperson added.

The ESFA declined to comment. Merritt and the Aleknas failed to respond to numerous requests for comment.

Gail Walker, who worked her way up to principal of Brooklands after joining in 2011, resigned from the college in March 2019 following the launch of the ESFA's investigation.

The college claimed at the time that this was “part of her long term personal plan”.

The chair of Brooklands used to be Jerry Tapp, who stood down as planned in September 2018, two months before *FE Week* first reported on the subcontracting arrangement with SCL Security.

The new chair is Terry Lazenby, who had been vice chair since 2014 and

was a member of three committees including audit.

Brooklands is a relatively small college, with total income during 2017/18 of £18.6 million and a £558,000 deficit.

“A clawback of £20 million could put the college at risk of insolvency”

The college had £3.4 million in cash (down from £4.6 million the year before), a £3.4 million long-term bank loan and £25 million in fixed assets in the buildings and land.

A clawback of £20 million could therefore put the college at risk of insolvency, something the college has declined to comment on.

SCL Security secured its first direct ESFA contract this year, which totalled £1 million and included apprenticeships and adult education budget cash, bringing it in scope for Ofsted inspection.

The education watchdog exposed ‘insufficient’ apprenticeship delivery at the provider in February which excluded employers and lacked

scrutiny.

SCL Security has worked with other prime providers in the past.

Catch 22 were one such prime provider. A spokesperson told *FE Week* they were audited earlier this year following the ESFA's investigation into SCL Security, but “we've have had no further information requests since”.

Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College also subcontracted to SCL Security, with deal worth £1.7 million in 2018/19, which covered basic English, maths and IT skills for learners whose first language is usually not English.

The college terminated this relationship earlier this year following *FE Week*'s revelations.

At the time, EHWLC's principal, Karen Redhead, said: “I understand from speaking with the ESFA that the issue was with regard to apprenticeships and contracts of employment. We do not subcontract to SCL Security Ltd on apprenticeships.”

She declined to comment this week on whether her college has since been audited by the ESFA.

Whilst the ESFA has investigated and taken action against Brooklands, it is unclear, at this time, if any action has been taken against SCL Security.



Department for Education

Further Education Adviser

The role of FE Commissioner was created in 2013 as an independent adviser to ministers at the Department for Education. The FE Commissioner is responsible for assessing the capacity of leadership and governance in colleges that have, or are at risk of, serious weakness in terms of quality or financial health. The FE Commissioner is supported by a team of Deputy Commissioners and Advisers.

As an FE Adviser specialising in finance, you will work closely with the FE Commissioner and Deputy FE Commissioners to assess underperforming colleges. You will take part in intervention visits, write reports and liaise closely with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), the FE Commissioner's team and colleges to ensure that the necessary changes are delivered swiftly. This includes reviewing the position of relevant FE Colleges, and advising the FE Commissioner, ministers, and the ESFA on the appropriate course of action.

Your work will help to determine the best way further education can be delivered in any given area. You will need to take account of the needs of learners, employers, national and local FE policies, and value for money as part of the Government's approach to support FE colleges and other FE institutions.

Successful candidates for this position will be highly experienced finance professionals within the FE sector. As a chartered accountant, you will have

exceptional financial expertise and experience. You will also have excellent communication skills and the ability to draft clear, concise reports following college visits. You will have experience of influencing stakeholders at the highest levels as well as excellent management and interpersonal skills. You must also have the ability to work effectively with civil servants, ministers, college leaders and other stakeholders and will show resilience and the capacity to maintain a positive approach in challenging circumstances.

Appointments for this role will be on a two-year fixed term contract. FE Advisers are remunerated at £600 a day plus expenses. The expected start date for this role is December 2019. Inductions will take place prior to start date.

Closing Date: 23:00 on 30 September 2019. Late applications will not be accepted.

How to apply: Please visit the following link <https://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/appointment/further-education-finance-adviser/> or email FE.COMMISSIONER@education.gov.uk mailbox to request a applicant pack.

Interviews will take place on Monday 4 November 2019 in London and you will need to be available for this date.



CEO/Principal - Salary Competitive



**KING
GEORGE V
COLLEGE**

Southport and KGV Sixth Form Colleges successfully merged in January 2018. We are now seeking to recruit a Principal to take the College on to the next stage of its history, creating an outstanding organisation for the people of Southport and the wider community.

An experienced leader, able to manage change and motivate staff to deliver outstanding performance, you will have an in-depth understanding of all elements of delivery of 16-19 through to adult, from apprenticeships to HE. Immersed in Teaching and Learning, you will be commercially and financially astute and able to maximise the opportunities provided by the College brands. Above all you will be committed to delivering an outstanding experience for our students and the communities we serve.

If this sounds like you then we would welcome your application. Contact Peter Ryder on **07496 845980** for a discussion

For more information visit: www.recruitment.rockborn.co.uk

Closing date 23rd September 2019





Exciting opportunities available in the highly successful, central Quality Team at LTE Group.

The Group reflects the strength of six sector-leading leading organisations (The Manchester College, Novus, Novus Cambria, UCEN Manchester, Total People and MOL) combined with the support, expertise and power of a wider group infrastructure. We are an equal opportunities employer welcoming applications from all sections of the community. All salary bands indicated are subject to job evaluation.

1. Assistant Principal: Quality & Standards

An inspirational manager is sought to provide outstanding leadership in improving teaching, training, learning and assessment across different business units of LTE Group. In the first instance, you will be responsible for the leadership of Quality Team's work in The Manchester College (FE provision), Total People (our ILP, largely responsible for apprenticeships) and MOL (provides professional qualifications through blended-learning). You will work closely with senior leaders and key quality practitioners within each business unit to drive forward the quality agenda, support and deputise for the Vice Principal: Quality and co-manage the Group Quality Team, ensuring we continually improve provision and are inspection/ review ready across each strand of delivery. Based in Manchester. Salary: £60,232 - £67,048. Applications close end Wednesday 18 September, assessment centre Wednesday 25 September, planned start date 1 January 2020.

2. Advanced Practitioners (Quality Improvement)

We want to expand our team of highly talented Advanced Practitioners with others who share their passion for teaching, learning and assessment. You will provide individual coaching for tutors, trainers and assessors across the Group to help them make sustained improvements and become the inspirational practitioners our students deserve. Drawing on your excellent knowledge/experience of teaching, learning and assessment, you will design and deliver high-quality CPD and conduct developmental learning observations. You will support Quality Team by working collaboratively to implement recommendations from internal reviews, supporting communities of learning and sharing areas of good and outstanding practice. We aim to recruit a work-based specialist as well as FE/ HE specialists. Based in Manchester with occasional travel to other locations. Salary: £32,973 - £38,740. Applications close end Wednesday 18 September; interviews Wednesday 25 September; start date 1 January 2020.

3. Learning Technologist

Exciting opportunity for a creative and innovative Learning Technologist to join the Learning Technology team within Group Quality. Promoting and supporting use of digital technologies, you will create digital resources and develop the digital capabilities of staff to

enhance the learning process and help us provide an outstanding learning experience for every learner. Your experience in supporting online and blended learning and delivering high-quality technology-focused training will help us drive improvements and realise an ambitious digital strategy. Based in Manchester. Salary: £26,682 - £31,400. Applications close end Monday 23 September; interviews early October; planned start date 1 January 2020.

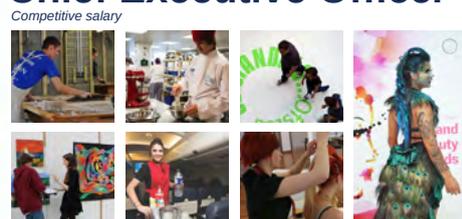
4. Tutor – Teacher Education Programmes (0.5 fractional)

Unique opportunity to join a well-established and highly regarded Teacher Education team. The post holder will contribute to Certificate in Education and PGCE in Lifelong Learning courses in collaboration with other tutors. You should have a passion for teaching, learning and assessment and a desire to share your knowledge and experience with new and existing teachers. Your understanding of sound pedagogical approaches and up-to-date knowledge of teaching in the lifelong learning sector will support students in their journey to becoming skilled teachers. Salary: £29,828 - £38,740 (pro-rata). Applications close end Monday 23 September; interviews early October; start date 1 January 2020.

If you wish to apply please visit <https://www.ltegroup.co.uk/careers>



Chief Executive Officer



STANDARDS SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

At East Sussex College Group, we are firmly focused on the future, and everything we do is centred around our three strategic priorities of standards, sustainability and strategic partnerships. As a relatively new organisation, we are able to respond on a broader canvas to the education and skills needs of the businesses and communities of East Sussex.

We have a number of exciting forward-looking plans in place and are seeking a new CEO to provide us with the vision and leadership to realise our ambitions whilst positioning us as one of the leading lights of the FE and skills sector.

We have appointed FE Associates to support us with this critical appointment. Interested parties are invited to have an initial discussion with our Lead Advisor, Matt Atkinson, ahead of the closing date and prior to submitting an application. This can be arranged by emailing matt.atkinson@fea.co.uk.

For further details and a candidate pack visit: www.fea.co.uk/escg-ceo/

Closing date for applications: **Noon on Friday 11th October 2019**
Interview dates: **Thursday 7th and Friday 8th November 2019**



**Head of Department
Service Industries
Permanent
£49,317 per annum**

Barnsley College is an exciting place to be. In recent times, we've enjoyed considerable success and our reputation for quality and innovation is growing all the time. We are looking for a highly driven, creative, curriculum specialist to join our College Management Team

Following the promotion of the previous post holder we are looking for an outstanding leader to take responsibility for driving forward this diverse curriculum area. The successful candidate will take responsibility for the delivery of FE, HE, Apprenticeships and full cost provision across Sport, Public Service, Travel & Tourism, Hair & Beauty and Catering & Hospitality.

The successful candidate will join a dynamic management team and be able to coach, mentor and influence colleagues at all levels across the department ensuring an outstanding experience for all our students and other stakeholders. High levels of management experience are essential to this role as is excellent budget control.

We expect staff to have a flexible approach to working in line with the strategic demands of the college.

The closing date for applications is midnight Sunday 29 September 2019

The selection process is due to take place on Tuesday 8 October 2019

To view the job description, person specification and additional information please visit www.barnsley.ac.uk/about-us/vacancies/

The successful candidate will receive 40 days annual leave entitlement (including bank and public holidays), access to the Teachers Pensions Scheme, a commitment to support job related training and development and access to a range of other staff benefits.

Barnsley College is committed to creating a dynamic and diverse workforce and welcomes applications from all candidates regardless of their gender, disability, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation or faith. Disabled applicants who meet the minimum essential criteria will be guaranteed an interview.

Management Apprenticeship Specialist (Assessor/Tutor)



Salary - Up to £33,000 (FTE) plus car/allowance and mileage plus Veolia benefits *listed below
Grade - 5.2

Location - Home based, with national travel
Hours - Full time, 40 hours per week, Monday to Friday

This role is being offered as a fixed term contract until May 2020.

What you'll do

Our Management Apprenticeship Specialist (Assessor/Tutor) is required to deliver an outstanding learner experience on the Management apprenticeship through effective and engaging teaching - but it doesn't stop there! You will enable our learners to maximise their potential through delivering classroom/group based training, field based visits and learning through digital platforms. Using a variety of engaging and interesting teaching and learning strategies, you will give learners access to a full range of high quality resources.

The experience you will need

You will already have apprenticeship delivery experience with a training provider/college or levy paying employer provider, with an A1 Assessing Qualification or equivalent.

You will also have an award in Education & Training (Level 3) or equivalent and the ability to deliver English and Maths functional skills.

You will also have proven experience of outstanding teaching, learning and assessment, with the ability to work flexibly to meet the needs of the business with your friendly and supportive attitude

Strong IT skills to include experience at using e-portfolio systems would also be advantageous.

Benefits you will receive within this role are

- Eligible for Company Car or Company Car Allowance
- The option to join the Veolia Pension Scheme
- Access to Veolia Rewards, benefits and discounts

- Free eye testing and money towards glasses if required for work purposes
- 25 days annual leave + statutory bank holidays

Where you'll work

People Development is a national function centred at our dedicated learning facility in the heart of the Midlands. You'll work with a network of creative people across the UK to are dedicated to partnering with the business and providing rewarding and stimulating development to all our employees.

This role is home based, but will require regular travel to key sites around the UK, including but not exhaustive to Wolverhampton, Warrington, Reading and London.

Who is Veolia?

We are the UK leader in Environmental Solutions. We offer services and expertise in waste, water and energy management helping to build a more sustainable future. As a global organisation, our work focuses on delivering simple but innovative solutions to preserving natural resources, reducing pollution and protecting our environment.

We live in a world that needs to take care of its resources, and our mission is to 'Resource the World'. Improving

communities and protecting the environment are right at the heart of our business.

It takes more than just words and ambition to achieve this, it takes the daily efforts of thousands of people across the UK to bring it to life. Together our employees make our communities better. They are the resourcers, behind the resources.

Veolia is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment and is proud to be an equal opportunity

employer. All applicants meeting the minimum criteria for the role will receive consideration for employment without regard to age, gender or gender expression, disability, race or ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or veteran status.

How to apply

Please send a CV and supporting statement to uki.veolia.resourcing.all.mailbox@veolia.com



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EDITORIAL



Come on Eileen – make sure this cannot happen again

It has been nearly a year now since, in November 2018, *FE Week* first reported that Brooklands College had paid a mysterious Andrew Merritt and his company SCL Security Ltd close to £20m as an apprenticeship subcontractor.

There is no evidence that SCL Security Ltd advertised their courses and the college was even unable (or unwilling) to say where the courses were delivered – and questions remain over exactly who Andrew Merritt is.

Around the same time as first exposing this scandal, *FE Week* also shared evidence with the Education and Skills Funding Agency, the body responsible for financial assurance over public funds.

We never received a response, but understand an ESFA investigation using three external audit firms was finally launched in March and in the same month the principal, Gail Walker, resigned.

The college has never once published or provided a statement to *FE Week* about the scandal and claimed the principal was “leaving the education sector in the summer as part of her long term personal plan”. The chair of governors, Terry Lazenby, in a press release (still on the college website) spoke of her “great work”.

And as reported today, we now know the investigation concluded that funding was being used to pay apprentice wages and the ESFA want their money back. This could put the future of the college in doubt and it seems likely the police will investigate.

The wider questions this scandal raises are: what went wrong; how can it be avoided in future and what responsibility is being taken by those who, unknowingly, allowed this to happen?

The principal did (after clinging on for several months)

quit – but what about the governors?

The chair of the college for most of the period was Jerry Tapp, who stood down as planned after two terms of four years in September 2018, two months before *FE Week* first reported on the subcontracting arrangement with SCL Security Ltd. It is worth noting, although not unusual, the chair was not a member of the audit committee.

However, prior to taking over as chair, Terry Lazenby had been vice chair since 2014, a member of three committees including audit and attended an impressive 32 out of 33 board and committee meetings in the past three years, according to the published college accounts.

It seems clear from audit committee meeting minutes that Lazenby was fully aware of the scale of subcontracting, noting in the September 2017 meeting it was “a significantly higher proportion of income

at Brooklands than many FE Colleges”.

Surely this scandal would never have reached the scale it had if the governors at the time had been doing their jobs, and Lazenby needs to make way for new leadership.

Questions also need to be asked about how SCL Security Ltd was paid close to £20 million despite the ESFA introducing new subcontracting controls, like the relatively new “annual report from an external auditor that provides assurance on their arrangements to manage and control their delivery subcontractors.”

Clearly there was a major failure of due diligence and contract management, something perhaps the ESFA account manager and or financial assurance team should take some responsibility for.

Then there are the audit firms. It is shocking to me that colleges have to spend tens of thousands each year on an

internal and a different external audit firm, but for what in return?

Is it time that some of the audit firms get investigated themselves, named and shamed and ultimately fined for failing at basic assurance work in the FE sector?

The chief executive of the ESFA, Eileen Milner, announced in June 2018 that her audit team was to be strengthened, and it is now in a Provider Market Oversight department led by Matthew Atkinson.

The ESFA approach to provider subcontracting and general financial assurance has for a long time needed far more investment and to be more interventionist – so watch this space.

Nick Linford, Editor
news@feweek.co.uk

Readers' reply



EMAIL



TWITTER



FACEBOOK



WEBSITE

Colleges receive £400m boost from chancellor Sajid Javid

f FE Colleges have major recruitment problems because salaries in the sector staff have fallen way behind school teachers. This meagre increase will do little to remedy that!

Terry Smyth

Association of Colleges gives cautious welcome to chancellor's FE funding boost

t That's all good, but will any of that money find its way to work-based employers' further education, who do much of the training for apprentices?

David Hilton

t Agree it is not enough to stabilise the sector and will do nothing to address the shortfall in funding for SMEs to train school leavers on apprenticeships

Mike Daykin

Providers urge ESFA to U-turn on plans to collect delivered off-the-job training hours

t I know this is an onerous task, but are we not doing it already? The only difference for me, is the inclusion of these figures in the ILR return. The funding guidance is very clear that we need to collate evidence of the actual off-the-job training hours, so really, this is nothing new.

Chris Todd

Commission calls for 'demoralising' GCSE English to be replaced

t Maybe some mileage in this? GCSE trades on brand recognition rather than utility (how many employers have ever looked at a spec...?), functional skills still seen as 'consolation prize'. Can't see it happening in England's current policy context, but ASCL absolutely right to float idea.

Paul Sceny

f Sounds like the old Key Skills. We already have Functional Skills which could be used rather than the massive cost of a new qualification. It's just a pity that following reform we have the least functional curriculum we have ever had.

Kerry Harris

Adult education slumps to lowest since major survey began more than 20 years ago

t Disappointing. Adult education is a huge part of the work we do at Pathway Group and have seen first-hand the impact it's having on people's lives.

Isa Mutlib

f ESFA to demand actual off-the-job training hour data for every apprentice Fair enough! Makes sense – only those not complying will be affected

Ellen Mould

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Providers urge ESFA to U-turn on plans to collect delivered off-the-job training hours



If the 20 per cent off-the-job is truly there to ensure quality, then give the responsibility for enforcing it to Ofsted (the government body for ensuring quality), not an auditor. Auditors are not qualified to judge what is and what is not quality training, all they can establish is if someone has done 20 per cent of it. 20 per cent of bad quality training is as bad as no training at all.

Jamie Rail

Experts

DR SAM PARRETT OBE

CEO and principal of London South East Colleges



MATT ATKINSON

Joint Managing Director of FE Associates and former Principal/Chief Executive of Bath College



What FE could learn from football... including a transfer window for staff

Could the football transfer process work in the regulated world of FE? It's worth a try, says Sam Parrett

Watching my husband glued to the TV for 24 hours during the last few days of the football transfer window made me think about how different further education might be if our employment law framework was similar to that of a football club.

The football transfer process, with its last-minute medical checks and signings, are usually a twice-yearly marital endurance test in the Parrett household. But last month we were on a cruise around the Baltics and Scandinavia, and an interesting debate took place about the wage bills, transfer costs, strengths and weaknesses of players, teams and the future prospects as the new season began.

As an FE principal who came up through the human resources route, I began to wonder what lessons we could learn for my sector.

In football, high-performing players are transferred to different clubs to strengthen their forward or defensive teams. How could that translate in FE? Could we have a more open culture where staff were able to change jobs more easily during "transfer windows"? If we had flexibility over salaries and the ability to pay our highest-performing staff more, recognising and rewarding them for exceptional performance as they do in football, a market-led model might improve retention and outcomes.

"A market-led model might improve retention and outcomes"

Similarly, just as football players are loaned to other clubs, could we send staff out on loan, or perhaps a secondment, to another college to broaden their skills and experience and add strength and experience to weaker organisations? Or maybe allow free transfers – in the same way that football clubs transfer a player out or recruit a free transfer on a swap basis.

Imagine if we principals could talk to each other in the same way; for example, if our demand for English and maths teachers is reducing at a time when we need business lecturers. Could we approach a neighbouring college with a reverse problem and, through consultation and negotiation with the individuals concerned, transfer staff so that each college has the staff with the right expertise?

"Senior management could swap roles to support career development"

The benefits are not just the obvious reductions in employment agency and placement fees, but also to staff and organisational development.

The similarities between the world of football and FE include league tables, constant press speculation and regulatory interference.

The possibility of a more dynamic and voluntary arrangement with genuine brokering and movement of staff, cooperation between colleges, college groups and even schools could be hugely beneficial to individuals and local communities.

We could see less restructuring and redundancy through better brokerage of employment at a local level and more stability in our backyard. This sort of collaboration and brokerage system within and across the sector could even work at principal level, giving senior management the opportunity for role swaps to support career development, such as deputies trying out the principal role.

As I pondered this approach while watching a sunset, I also considered the potential drawbacks: the manager and player commodity market is much more transient and less stable than the employment protection and security of our current employment terms and conditions. For example there would also be a risk of pay costs escalating, although this is something we could control in a more dynamic market environment.

It's an idea worth trying. So I'm throwing down the gauntlet to see if anyone else would like to join my college in seeing if we can create a more dynamic systems-led approach to staff recruitment that helps our staff development too.

What's wrong with aiming for excellence in the face of policy changes?

Grappling with new political strategies takes precious time and resources, so we should stay focused on the quest for the best education

Part of the lifecycle of any organisation is to revisit the strategic plan, reconsider the vision, rethink the mission and ponder the values and culture required to keep moving forward. If the current political climate can teach us anything, it is surely how important it is to take this work seriously.

Yet the current zeitgeist is that vision and mission are old hat, and organisational purpose is where it's at. But if we allow excellence to become a means rather than an end, do we stand to lose more than we realise?

Institutional leaders grapple with the development of new strategies and plans, and that is hard enough in itself. But the continual work of seeking to tie these in with the latest direction in government policy or industry trend – be it employability, wealth creation, social cohesion or economic rejuvenation – is as thankless as it is intensive, and it is not clear that it leads to real, sustained progress.

The problem with this approach is that policy in the world of further education and skills moves as quickly as social change, and not always in the same direction.

Trying to align one's organisational strategy and vision to reflect the hot political issue of the day runs the risk of losing sight of what really matters.

Current thinking would suggest that educational excellence is a means to an end, namely the creation of a highly-skilled workforce that will aid the productivity of UK Plc. But what about seeing the provision of educational excellence as an end in itself for every person in our organisation, from learners' experiences to staff CPD?

"Policy in further education and skills moves as quickly as social change"

The mission of achieving excellence seems an impossible and nebulous one, but it outlives the vast majority of the policy fancies that come and go.

It can aid organisational stability, keep staff focused and enable leadership teams to develop clear and identifiable purpose that can be effectively communicated to others. For that to happen, we must define our own excellence as a sector, and as organisations.

Placing our primary focus on high-quality education as an end in itself means our provision becomes wholly inclusive by default – as relevant to Learners with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities (LLDD) as to higher education students.

Putting educational excellence front and centre also avoids questionable debates as to why certain provision is offered, because the question is no longer one of short-term decision-making but of breadth and depth of curriculum.

It secures the confidence of staff in what they are delivering, and provides a very clear set of principles that everyone can get behind.

"We must define our own excellence as a sector"

Striving to provide our learners with the best possible educational opportunities has obvious benefits. An educational climate focused on building and enhancing learner confidence can only result in a strong local and national reputation for the college. Teaching and mentoring that support employability skills in young people and adults ensures that employers' needs are met.

And if reputation and impact aren't enough, high-calibre educational providers in the FE sector can also reap benefits through strengthening learner numbers, new and profitable relationships with employers and attracting the highest-performing staff.

Educational excellence as a means to other ends – that are never truly under our control – is a recipe for instability. It leaves us at the mercy of others' priorities, policies and pet projects, chasing often-unattainable goals.

With a general election looming, we face the prospect of new ministerial faces and new policy ideals. By keeping our eyes on the prize of educational excellence, by embracing it as the reward in itself, our college-level strategies can remain constant amidst the policy turbulence and prove a true enabler of organisational resilience, success and prosperity.

Apprenticeship schemes should be at the heart of social, educational and economic policy

The apprenticeship system in its current state isn't working. This isn't simply a gnarly policy issue, or a practical concern for businesses and learning providers. It is a profound economic and social justice issue, which disproportionately affects the most disadvantaged and perpetuates inequalities.

There are many reasons why apprenticeships and skills are important, but the moral imperative to ensure that we support people into work and enable those in low-paid and insecure work to progress is paramount. Through a collaborative approach, we can make an impact.

There is no shortage of proposals as to how apprenticeships and skills policy should change. However, there is a need for more immediate, collaborative action. Last year, a study published by the Institute for Public Policy Research found that businesses need support to make the system work better for them, and to better support the progression of low-paid, low-skilled workers.

While the 60 London employers in the study indicated enthusiasm for making the apprenticeship levy work better, no business can act effectively alone. Similarly, neither local government nor sector experts can make an impact in isolation. We face a collective action problem. Collaboration is key.

Why? The UK suffers a longstanding 'progression gap', with just one in four adults moving out of low pay over the decade to 2012. We also face low and declining investment in continuing vocational training compared with the EU average, while the adult skills budget is undergoing cuts amounting

ANNA AMBROSE

Director of London Progression Challenge at the Institute for Public Policy Research



Practical collaboration must be the way forward for apprenticeships

to 45 per cent in real terms in the decade to 2020/21. It is adults with the lowest levels of qualifications, in lower-paying occupations and in lower socioeconomic groups – those least likely to participate in learning – who bear the brunt.

Meanwhile, employers cite significant skills gaps in many sectors. For example, 53 per cent of construction employers responding to a recent Build UK survey reported having found it difficult to source skilled workers in the last quarter, while 50 per cent of employers surveyed by the Open University in 2018 reported digital skills shortages.

Apprenticeships can help to address these challenges as part of a broader approach to skills

development, but we're a long way from success. Employers spent just 14 per cent of their pot in the first 18 months of the apprenticeship levy policy. This week, the Department for Education announced that the amount of funds expiring in employers' apprenticeship accounts was £44 million in July. In August, it was £52 million. By August this year the DfE reported just 610 apprenticeship starts resulting from levy transfers between large employers and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in their supply chain or local area.

In the capital, mayor Sadiq Khan quoted a survey of employers which suggested that 47 per

cent didn't intend to use their levy funds in the next year. IPPR analysis found that London has a significantly lower rate of apprenticeship starts than the national average, and a lower rate of progress from low- to mid-skilled work. The need for further support at all stages of the employers' apprenticeship journey is clear.

“Employers cite significant skills gaps in many sectors”

This week's spending review was silent on both apprenticeships and adult education funding, but that's no reason to despair. There's a real opportunity for government, civil society and businesses to come together with innovative solutions that benefit individuals and employers without requiring large-scale policy change.

The launch of the London Progression Collaboration (LPC) – an initiative being delivered by the IPPR and the Greater London Authority, with the support of over 40 employers and the financial support of J.P. Morgan – exemplifies this. The LPC will offer free business support to help London employers navigate the apprenticeship landscape and offer high-quality, sustainable opportunities for progression. It will broker and facilitate the levy transfer process and ensure SMEs can access hands-on support at every step.

It's the kind of practical solution employers told us they need – one which works with their businesses and has the interests of low-paid Londoners at its heart.

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Bulletin



Joanne McManus

**Associate principal,
Northumberland College**

Start date September 2019

Previous job

Faculty director, engineering, construction and commercial,
Sunderland College

Interesting fact

She loves ironing



Ed Sallis

**Governor,
MidKent College**

Start Date August 2019

Previous job

Chair, DfE's Technical education panel for education and
childcare

Interesting fact

He was the principal of Highlands College on Jersey for 15 years



Iain Nixon

**Vice principal, partnerships
and commercial, Education
Partnership North East**

Start date May 2019

Previous job

Executive director, commercial activity, Sunderland College

Interesting fact

He volunteers as team leader of the Northumberland National
Park Mountain Rescue Team



Vikkie Morton

**Vice principal, student services
and registry, Education
Partnership North East**

Start date May 2019

Previous job

Assistant principal, student and customer experience,
Sunderland College

Interesting fact

She celebrated her 40th birthday by dancing at dawn as part of
May Day celebrations to mark the beginning of summer

Movers & Shakers

...

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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

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

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.



Solutions

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

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