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EDITION 290

WHISTLEBLOWER IN £20M COLLEGE SCANDAL IGNORED

- Local MP Philip Hammond and Marsden demand answers after ESFA ignored warning nearly two years ago
- Subcontractor given close to £20m admits paying controversial recruitment agency a monthly "finders fee"

BILLY CAMDEN | BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

See exclusive on pages 8 and 9

PRINCIPAL'S £150,000 EXPENSES REVEALED ...FINALLY



STELLA MBUBAEGBU, Highbury College



"The Secretary of State and I are deeply concerned by these revelations. I have already asked the FE Commissioner to urgently look into this matter. School and college leaders must treat taxpayers' money with the utmost care and in a way that benefits their students. Where this does not happen we take the strongest possible action. The attempt to block disclosure in this instance, which was rightly overturned by the information commissioner, was shocking and FE Week should be commended for their dogged pursuit in this matter of public interest." **LORD AGNEW, EDUCATION MINISTER**

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EA TO MANAGING DIRECTOR
AND FINANCIALS

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Victoria Boyle

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News

Government to probe ‘deeply concerned’

BILLY CAMDEN
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Exclusive

Ministers have ordered the FE Commissioner to investigate a principal’s “deeply concerning” corporate credit card use after her college was forced by FE Week to reveal £150,000 was spent in just four years.

Over 500 receipts obtained by this newspaper following a year-long freedom of information battle with Highbury College have lifted the lid on the lavish spending of its boss Stella Mbubaegbu.

College funds were spent on first class flights and five-star hotels in London and around the world.

She racked up a £350 bill – including a £45 lobster and nearly £100 on cocktails – at a Michelin star restaurant.

Mbubaegbu also travelled in luxury cars, including a Cadillac and “executive chauffeurs” and spent £434 on a pair of headphones.

It comes at a time of redundancies at the college, in Portsmouth, which axed its sixth form two months ago, amid deteriorating finances and its Ofsted grade plunging from ‘outstanding’ to ‘requires improvement’. The last time staff got a pay rise was in January 2013.

Department for Education minister Lord Agnew, who oversees the FE Commissioner, said he and education secretary Gavin Williamson were “deeply concerned by these revelations”.

“I have already asked the FE Commissioner to urgently look into this matter,” he added.

“School and college leaders must

treat taxpayers’ money with the utmost care and in a way that benefits their students. Where this does not happen we take the strongest possible action.”

The college’s board appears to have recognised the excessive spending. Minutes published from a meeting in May show they have restricted international and first class travel, as well as banning lunch and alcoholic drink claims.

A college spokesperson said the expenses released to FE Week were “approved and authorised and were then subject to independent audit, as is usual practice”.

The receipts acquired and analysed by this newspaper covered the academic years 2014/15 to 2017/18.

The highest spend was for travel – totalling over £70,000. That included first or business class flights

and trains, as well as luxury car rides including in Cadillacs.

Mbubaegbu claimed for 17 flights that cost over £1,000 – with an average of £3,170 – to several destinations for an annual conference in the USA, as well as trips to Canada, India, Germany and Dubai.

The most expensive single flight was for £6,202, purchased on May 3, 2018, to Saudi Arabia – where the college runs Jeddah College.

The findings prompt questions over the extent of international travel, as the college does not have ventures in the majority of the countries visited. FE Week is investigating this further.

The college refused to say if any of the flights were not first class.

Receipts from the principal’s travels also show taxi rides including the use of “executive chauffeurs”.

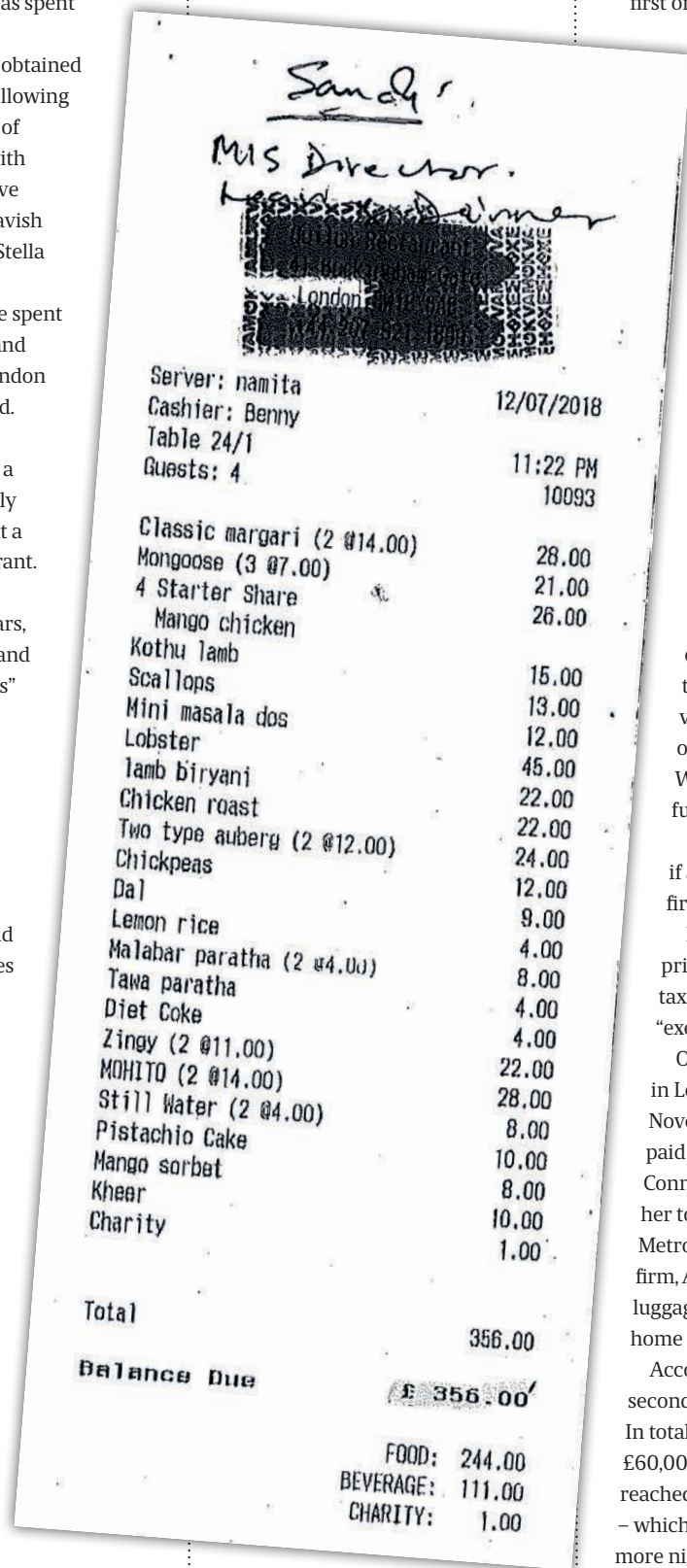
One shows that after landing in London Heathrow on November 16, 2016, Mbubaegbu paid £175 for a firm called Connect Executive Cars to take her to the Hilton Birmingham Metropole hotel, while another firm, Aqua Cars, picked up her luggage and took it back to her home address in Hampshire.

Accommodation was the second highest expenditure. In total she spent more than £60,000 on hotel stays and reached Hilton Diamond status – which typically requires 60 or more night bookings in a single year.

Hotels were mostly four or five stars and ranged from stays across America, Canada, Germany, South Africa, Dubai, China and Saudi Arabia, to four separate nights at the



Stella Mbubaegbu



A £2,000 limit has now been placed on the principal’s corporate card. The college would not say whether this was a monthly or annual limit.

“A vast amount was spent on first class flights”

Portsmouth Marriott Hotel – located less than a 10-minute drive away from the college and 20 minutes from her home address.

The principal’s international trips haven’t gone unnoticed by staff as the board minutes from May state: “Staff wanted management, especially the

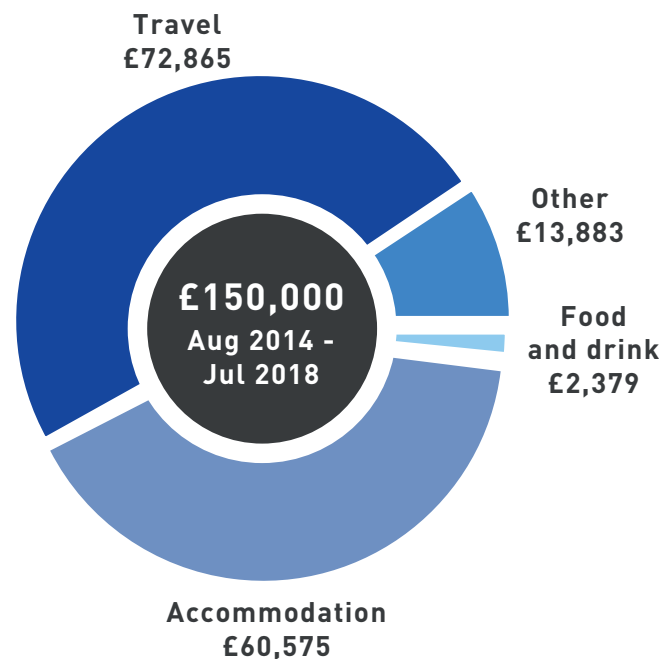
principal, to be more visible within the college. Staff wanted to feel valued and heard.

“The chair believed morale was low and that staff felt disempowered.”

A chunk of expenses were claimed for activities in England. In July 2018, the principal spent £356 for a meal with three other guests at Quilon, a Michelin star restaurant in London.

The receipt shows that the drinks bill alone, including cocktails such as mojitos and margaritas, cost over £100. A £45 lobster main course was also included in the order.

The day before the meal Mbubaegbu travelled to London and stayed at the



'Spending' card use by Highbury principal

Hilton Hotel in Euston for one night at a cost of £313. On the night of the meal she checked into the five-star Conrad St James hotel in Westminster. Her one-night stay cost £385.

Another standout monthly corporate card expense, for November 2016, shows that Mbubaegbu purchased BeoPlay H8 Headphones at an Apple Store in Washington, America for \$528 (£434).

“There was a very limited safety net if cash ran out”

Elsewhere, in January 2015, she paid for a \$655 (£445) dinner for six people

at Ruth's Chris Steak House while out in Orlando. It included a \$56 (£44) bottle of Kim Crawford Sauvignon Blanc and multiple \$50 (£40) ribeye steaks.

The principal's card was also used to purchase a £219.99 Kenwood dishwasher from Curry's on September 11, 2017. The college would not say whether this was bought for personal or college use.

Multiple books for the senior leadership team were also bought on Mbubaegbu's corporate card, including one single £750 purchase for 50 copies of *Mission: How the Best in Business Break Through*.

Other titles of some of the books include: *Governance of Financial Management* and *Check The Ego: Operate with a high degree of humility by admitting mistakes and taking responsibility*.

Highbury College's latest accounts, for 2017/18, show a deficit of £2.48

million and state that its financial position has “deteriorated over the last three years”.

The board minutes from May 2019 state there “was a very limited safety net if cash ran out”.

“The attempt to block disclosure was shocking”

They added that “in the light of budgetary constraints”, all foreign travel must now be authorised by the chair or vice-chair; all travel to be 2nd class unless authorised by the chair/ vice-chair; and no lunch claims or alcohol claims can be made.

The college spokesperson added that Highbury “maintains continuous

review of its procedures” to ensure that it “achieves good use of public money to meet the needs of our students and the community”.

The college declined to comment on whether any of the expenses were reimbursed by the principal.

Highbury College blocked its staff from accessing *FE Week's* website in January after we reported published board minutes had revealed its lawyers were trying to recoup a £1.4 million debt in Nigeria.

The college lifted the block following outcry from then skills minister Anne Milton and chief Ofsted inspector Amanda Spielman, and after the *Press Gazette* reported

the hypocrisy of a college restricting access to the media whilst promoting high quality journalism courses.

The college also attempted to keep the expenses a secret by refusing our FOI request, a decision that the information commissioner investigated and then overturned.

Agnew said: “The attempt to block disclosure in this instance, which was rightly overturned by the information commissioner, was shocking and *FE Week* should be commended for their dogged pursuit in this matter of public interest.”

Mbubaegbu was appointed as the first principal of Highbury College after incorporation 18 years ago, and was awarded a CBE in the 2008 New Year Honours for services to further education.



Lord Agnew

HALTON REPORT IS USEFUL PRECEDENT AS ATKINS GETS TO WORK

The FE Commissioner, Richard Atkins, is now being sent in to investigate the use of Highbury College's principal's corporate card.

Atkins was a college principal when the government funding agency investigated “extravagant” college credit card spending at Halton College 20 years ago.

So in terms of a precedent, it is well worth dusting off the *Report of the Investigation into Alleged Financial Irregularities at Halton College* published in April 1999.

The report author, David Melville,



Richard Atkins

chief executive of the Further Education Funding Council, wrote: “I have identified a number of inappropriately extravagant items of expenditure on certain trips...staying in expensive hotels, eating in restaurants with costly food and wine, and incurring excessive or unnecessary expense. None of this expense has been properly related to the benefit of the college...I find that expenditure on college credit cards was not adequately controlled.”

But like Highbury in recent months, the Halton board had begun to tackle the problem.

“I am pleased to note that the college has now amended

the financial regulations to state that the use of college credit cards should be reduced to an absolute minimum and that expenditure on credit cards should be claimed with the same receipting procedures and with the same frequency as any other expenses claim.”

The Halton report concluded that: “The level of accommodation or class or means of travel, whilst appropriate to business needs, should not be capable of being regarded as lavish. In addition, colleges should ensure that the use of college credit cards is covered by their financial regulations and monitored carefully.”

And “the findings of these investigations indicate that the principal has not properly discharged his duties as accounting officer of the college, and therefore raise sufficient doubt for the board to consider his future as principal

of the college”.

Shortly after publication, the BBC reported on 15 April 1999 that the principal and deputy principal had “resigned after a damning report on its finances. Martin Jenkins and Jenny Dolphin quit their posts at Halton College in Widnes, Cheshire, with immediate effect.”

“They left, citing ill health, within 24 hours of the publication of a report which found the college was unable to justify spending more than £6m of public money.”

In September 1999 the BBC reported the college auditors had been sacked after further investigations by the National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee hearing.

And in 2006 Halton College and Widnes & Runcorn Sixth Form College merged to create Riverside College.



News

First provider spills the beans on 'very different' Ofsted regime

FRASER WHIELDON
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Exclusive

The first FE provider to be inspected under the new Ofsted framework has given it the thumbs-up, but warned: if you're in it for the money, you'll be found out.

“It felt like a pretty significant shift in focus”

Apprenticeship and adult learning provider Woodspeen Training, based in Huddersfield, had a full inspection last week after Ofsted began using the new framework this month.

“It was very different,” said managing director John Deaville. “I



John Deaville

thought this was going to be an incremental change, but it felt like a pretty significant shift in focus and emphasis on the inspection process.”

The watchdog's focus has shifted from outcomes to the “quality of education” and what is being called the three I's: intent, implementation, and impact.

Six inspectors were at Woodspeen from Tuesday to Friday, interviewing around 25 to 30 per cent of the around 500 apprentices and 1,200 learners and quizzing members of its 50-odd staff.

There were no lesson observations, or sifting through success rate data: at most, the inspectors spent 40 minutes talking about success rates, but had “endless conversations” with staff about impact.

“They really get under the skin of why you're doing it, how you're doing it and what the impact is of what you do,” Deaville found.

Inspectors were asking whether a learner who had achieved went straight into employment, or improved their skills, and how Woodspeen is evidencing that.

“It was a real focus on what have you done for these people, not just did they get a piece of paper and a qualification, and that was hugely different,” Deaville said.

“It kind of suited my organisation because we're at the lower end of skills, we do more levels two and three, so we find it quite easy to demonstrate we're really adding value to some learners and we're not just accrediting existing skills.”

Deaville always thought the old emphasis on outcomes for learners was wrong, saying: “You could stage manage it, put on a few good lessons, and be almost home.”

“You could stage manage it and be almost home”

He warned other providers might not be so fortunate now, as inspectors speak to so many



learners and ask so many staff about their methods, they get a pretty comprehensive picture of a provider.

“I think if someone is in the business for the wrong reasons, and they're chasing money and genuinely not providing the level learners require, I think they will be found out.

“You have to back up your intent. ‘Why you're doing what you're doing.’”

As for implementation, in place of lesson observations, inspectors instead attended sessions and interacted by asking teachers why they were teaching that now and how was that building upon what learners studied last week.

They also asked learners how they felt about the sessions: “We reckon one inspector spoke to 40 of our learners, so that was a big difference.”

Another big difference was the focus on staff workload, questioning staff on whether they have the right support, and how much work they have on.

There was very little attention paid to self-assessment reports or previous inspection outcomes, and inspectors

spent only a few hours discussing leadership and management, preferring to observe its effects in the classrooms.

“There was really clear rationale to our curriculum”

Asked whether they were prepared for the new inspection, Deaville said: “I'm not sure we were in terms of how the inspection would run. And it was very different. We were quite confident our learners would speak highly about us.”

But they struggled on impact because although they had done learner destination surveys after three and six months, “it was just not robust enough when it came to really describing to Ofsted what the impact of our curriculum had on these people”.

He does prefer this new system, however, especially the focus on intent and impact, where he thinks the sector needs to “raise its game and demonstrate the impact we have on learners”.

His advice to providers fretting about an inspection was to get the three I's right: “If you get those, you will fly through.”

Deaville felt the inspection was “good”, after Woodspeen was rated as ‘requires improvement’ in August 2013.

“We had a failed entry into the manufacturing market which cost us a grade three, so we pulled out of that and refocused on West Yorkshire and that was really, really useful actually,” he explained.

“I came in 12 months ago, and there was a real focus on strategy so it meant our intent was really clear.

“We had done a lot of work on who are we, what should we be doing so there was really clear rationale to our curriculum and what we're doing.

“I think potentially that was really useful going into this process.”

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News

ESFA ignored whistleblower nearly

BILLY CAMDEN
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Exclusive

A whistleblower reported the £20 million Brooklands College subcontracting scandal to the Education and Skills Funding Agency in 2017 but no action was taken until *FE Week* exposed it nearly two years later.

Former chancellor Philip Hammond, who is the MP for the constituency the college is based in, said the revelation was “very concerning” while shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden has demanded an “urgent” independent investigation into this lack of oversight.

“I am very concerned about the situation”

It comes as the owner of the subcontracting firm involved, SCL Security Ltd, has broken his silence and claimed the college was “made aware” that he would pay employers a “finder’s fee” for apprentices, which would ultimately pay their wages and is strictly against the Education and Skills Funding Agency’s funding rules.

FE Week has seen evidence that a former employee of the recruitment firm involved in the investigation, which was subject to an *FE Week* exposé in 2016 – Workforce Staffing Ltd (formerly e-Response) – blew the whistle about its relationship with SCL Security and Brooklands College in early 2017.

A senior auditor at the ESFA was



handed the information but seemingly chose to ignore it. Millions of pounds of public money continued to go into the hands of SCL Security through its subcontracting arrangement with Brooklands College as a result.

The agency did not launch the investigation, which has involved three separate audit firms, until *FE Week* reported in November 2018 that the subcontractor was working with Workforce and no evidence could be found that the courses were advertised, who the apprentices at SCL Security were, or where it trained them.

Speaking on the record to this newspaper for the first time since the scandal came to light, Andrew Merritt, the owner of SCL Security, appeared to be in the dark about the ESFA’s investigation other than meeting an agency worker around a month ago.

He admitted that he paid Workforce Staffing Ltd a “finder’s fee” each month

that the apprentice was on programme and didn’t see anything wrong with this, although admitted he was not aware of any other providers doing the same.

And he claimed that Brooklands College was aware of the payments to employers, but never challenged it.

“Staff at Brooklands College were aware we made finder’s fees payments to employers who recruited their own apprentices and it has never been raised as being anything other than above board,” Merritt said.

Asked about this, the college said it was “unable to comment on ongoing ESFA investigations” and it would be “inappropriate to go into any detail publicly at this time”.

One of the employers paid “finder’s fees” was Workforce, which recruited 16-18 year-olds who attended training facilities branded as SCL Security, but on Workforce premises.

Merritt refused to say how much

these fees were or which other employers he worked with but did not deny the fees could have been used to pay wages.

The hundreds of apprentices trained by SCL Security were all aged 16 to 18 studying IT apprenticeships worth around £20,000 each in public funding. There is no employer fee for 16 to 18 year-olds and in addition to the “finder’s fee” some employers may have been eligible for a government incentive payment.

FE Week reported last week that the ESFA has now demanded a clawback of around £20 million from Brooklands, which threatens the college’s solvency.

“I will be writing to the Secretary of State demanding an urgent independent investigation”

Hammond, who resigned as chancellor to the Treasury in July, told *FE Week*: “I am very concerned about the situation. I am visiting the college next week to meet with the interim chief executive and principal.”

Marsden said: “It is extremely concerning to hear that despite a reported credible tip-off in early 2017, ESFA and the DfE seemingly didn’t follow up on it.

“That is why I will be writing to the Secretary of State demanding an urgent independent investigation into the lack of oversight from the department

and how this activity was allowed to continue for over two years.”

Workforce is headed up by two brothers, Paul and Joe Alekna.

An *FE Week* investigation three years ago found they switched the ownership of a successful provider they ran from one parent company – eResponse – to another, before transferring out £6 million, liquidating it and leaving learners and creditors on the hook for millions of pounds.

Meanwhile, the brothers continued to run another provider called Options 2 Workplace. But when *FE Week* exposed the situation the ESFA cancelled its contract.

Workforce has recently been caught up in what has been described as the UK’s biggest ever modern slavery investigation (see page 9).

Asked about the Brooklands scandal, Workforce claimed it was not part of the ESFA’s investigation but does not deny their relationship with SCL Security.

“No part of Workforce Staffing or any other company within our group is responsible for government funded training,” a statement from the firm said.

“We do not operate as subcontractors and nor are we involved in any delivery or administration.

“As a recruitment business, and with no affiliation to the training industry we are not part of, or supporting any investigation with the ESFA.

“The sole focus of every single employee at Workforce is the sourcing, screening and selection of applicants for the many hundreds of employers we proudly represent across the Midlands.”

Since *FE Week* first exposed the scandal the DfE has repeatedly refused to comment.



Philip Hammond



Gordon Marsden

Two years before *FE Week* exposé

Judge branded Workforce bosses 'gullible' in landmark human trafficking case

This month, e-Response, now named Workforce Staffing Ltd, featured in a BBC Panorama programme called 'The Hunt for Britain's Slave Gangs'.

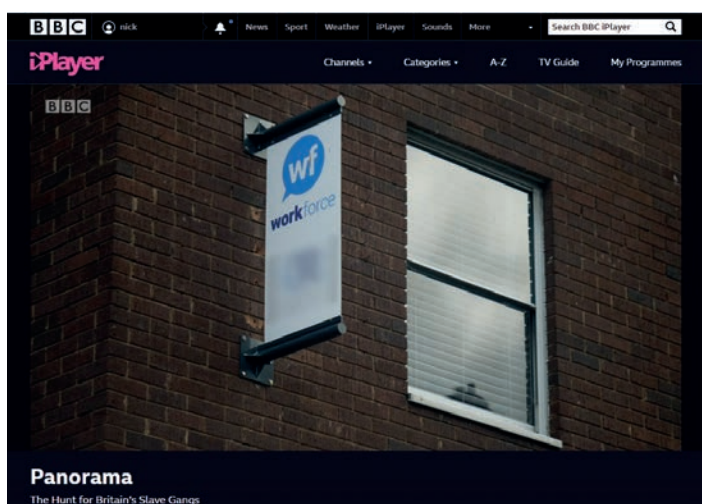
The bosses of the recruitment firm involved in the Brooklands College subcontracting scandal were described as "gullible" by a judge after she convicted one of their former employees for human trafficking.

Julianna Chodakowicz worked at Workforce until November 2015.

She was sentenced to five years in jail for her part in a Polish slavery ring on 5 July 2019. The case was described by Judge Mary Stacey as "the largest conspiracy of its type ever known".

The gang trafficked up to 400 homeless people, ex-prisoners and alcoholics from Poland to the West Midlands, forcing them to work for anything from £100 to just £20 per week and live in "squalid and overcrowded" properties.

They relied on Chodakowicz as an "insider" at Workforce who signed-up



dozens of the victims for work.

She was being paid £100 for each job she gave to slavery victims and a weekly payment of £20 from each of their wages by her gang partner. She denied being involved in the conspiracy after her arrest, but phone records and text messages seized by police discredited her account.

The judge at Birmingham Crown Court sentenced five people to a combined total of 35 years, a record for a human trafficking case.

When approached by *FE Week* about the case Workforce claimed that its "systems played a key role in helping the case against the ringleaders and our databases and stringent

registration processes have since helped to thwart other instances of trafficking".

Joe Alekna, the firm's managing director, also shared an email from the West Midlands Police that thanked the owners for their help and said they had been "instrumental in obtaining the information we needed to put the matter to court".

However, the Judge said Chodakowicz was often "praised as a high performer" by her "gullible" bosses at Workforce for her stand-out recruitment performance, believing she had been able to recruit 20 or more workers at a time from her "wide social network" and "clever marketing skills".

Chodakowicz advised the other conspirators on how to train the slaves on what to say and how to behave to avoid the conspiracies coming to light.

The court heard how she altered bank account details to deprive the workers of their wages and even stopped genuine job seekers from

being registered so as to ensure there were sufficient vacancies for the trafficked victims.

Workforce describes itself on its website as an "award-winning recruitment, staffing and Workforce Solutions specialist".

It is a member of the Recruitment and Employment Confederation as well as Gangmasters Licencing Authority and the Association of Labour Providers.

A spokesperson for the Recruitment and Employment Confederation said if "we suspect that Workforce Staffing Ltd are in breach of the Code we will conduct an investigation under our complaints and disciplinary procedures".

A spokesperson for the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority said it would "not comment on individual licence holders unless they had their licence suspended or revoked".

The Association of Labour Providers confirmed that Workforce is one of its members but did not comment on the human trafficking case.

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News

Flagship national college plans to 'dissolve' despite DfE bailouts

FRASER WHIELDON
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Exclusive

One of the five government flagship national colleges plans to "dissolve" and hand over its courses to a college and private training provider after failing to recruit enough students, FE Week can reveal.

National College Creative Industries was set up in 2016 with £5.5 million of government funding, and despite bailouts to stay afloat is now consulting on moving to a licensing model in which it quits as a provider.

Under the plans Access Creative College will take over running the apprenticeships, while South Essex College will take over classroom provision and the running of The Backstage Centre, the commercial production and rehearsal venue where NCCI is based.

A spokesperson for the NCCI said "the existing FE Corporation will dissolve to form a new Company Limited by



Guarantee and deliver provision through its partners, this is similar to the successful model demonstrated by the National College for Nuclear.

"The National College vision will continue to be promoted and strengthened through the new legal structure."

A new company, NCCI Ltd, will "steer the development of new curriculum at higher levels to address sector needs, while also ensuring the quality

of its licenced provision", added the spokesperson, much like the Baker-Dearing Trust manages licences for university technical colleges.

Sue Dare, NCCI's interim principal, said: "We are aiming for a seamless transition to our new way of working and are confident that these new arrangements will enable us to continue to improve our delivery and support for employers, apprentices and learners, while also enabling us

to extend our capacity and reach for creative industries employers across the country."

Its plans will need sign-off from the Department for Education if they are to go ahead on January 31.

Angela O'Donoghue, the principal of South Essex College, said the partnership would "create further opportunities to engage with providers from across the sector," and would make The Backstage Centre "a magnet for industry and industry training in the southeast".

NCCI started to look for partner organisations after it made it through 2017-18 as a "going concern" after a £600,000 bailout from the Department for Education, as FE Week reported in June.

It also received a £1.25 million working capital loan, £745,000 of which was paid out during 2017-18, with the remaining £505,000 drawn down in 2018-19.

The DfE also reprofiled loans and deferred the repayment start date from March 2019 to March 2023.

NCCI opened in 2016 as one of five centres the government promised

would train an estimated 21,000 students by 2020 in "industries central to the productivity agenda such as digital and high-speed rail".

Yet NCCI started with just 16 learners and has struggled to meet its target of 1,000 learners a year since then – recruiting only 167 between May 2018 and May this year.

The DfE revealed in a written answer in May that NCCI was looking for potential partners as part of a structure and prospects appraisal.

The National College for High Speed Rail has also had to move from its original model and is looking to change its name to the National College for Advanced Transport and Infrastructure to broaden its offering.

This is after it needed a £4.55 million DfE bailout to avoid being unable to sign off its 2017-18 accounts.

The National Colleges for Digital Skills and Nuclear are both open, but the National College for Onshore Oil and Gas has not started yet.

The DfE, which has sunk £80 million into the colleges, late last year launched an evaluation of the scheme.

Criminal investigation launched following college cyber attack

FRASER WHIELDON
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Cyber criminals have hacked into the personal data, and potentially bank details, of students and staff at Swindon College, in the latest computer crime to affect a further education institution.

A statement from the college says the data breach happened in the latter half of last week, and it has affected both past and present students and staff, but the college has not confirmed how many.

Swindon College's phones were offline as a result, and its website has been updated with the college's logo and a message saying: "Important announcement for staff, former staff, current and former students and apprentices. Data breach – immediate action."

The college's statement said: "Swindon College's network system has been subject to a targeted cyber-attack this week that has resulted in unauthorised access to personal data".

"You are potentially at risk," it reads before it advises people to contact their bank to find out if there is any suspicious activity on their account.

The college will be able to contact anyone who has been personally affected by the breach early this week.

The breach has been reported to the Information Commissioner's Office and the National Crime Agency, however officers from Wiltshire Police's digital investigations and intelligence unit are investigating the cyber attack rather than the agency.

A spokesperson for Wiltshire Police said the crime was reported on September 12, and "enquiries are currently ongoing".

An ICO spokesperson said: "Swindon

College has reported an incident to us and we will assess the information provided."

This is the latest act of cyber crime to affect an FE college, after South Staffordshire College fell victim earlier this month to an 'ethical hacker' who, the college claimed, sent emails doctored to include a racist word to media, staff and a local councillor.

Following the hack, principal Claire Boliver said: "The contents of the email with an alleged racist remark is fabricated. There is clear evidence that proves the email has been edited."

Police have been investigating the case since.

In June, fraudsters hacked into the email account of Lakes College principal Chris Nattress and sent a link to his contacts to "review and sign", in what is known as a phishing scam.

The ESFA released guidance for colleges on phishing scams, where



a criminal will be disguised as a trustworthy source in an electronic communication to trick people into giving them their personal details.

Computer users, the ESFA advised, should ensure they have firewalls, strong passwords and anti-virus software in place, be alert to emails

containing seemingly legitimate links, and check whoever sent the email is genuine before the user sends them passwords, data or payment.

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

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Feature

Community and culture

JL DUTAUT

JL.DUTAUT@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Many leaders wrestle with the challenge of building an effective and coherent team. At City College Norwich, JL Dutaut finds that Corrie Peasgood has not so much built one as grown one.

Decisions can feel like a high-wire act when you're in a position of responsibility. Mistakes are visible, and inevitable. "There have to be Jacky moments," says Jacky Sturman, the executive manager at City College Norwich – with a self-deprecation that I've already come to expect from the CCN executive team. "What matters is how you deal with them."

"It's not an easy place to work, but it is a great place"

A core strength pervades Corrie Peasgood's team. It's evident in their humility, how they treat each other, how they go about leading a college with almost 9000 students, and how they approach the many and diverse challenges they face.

Some are challenges they share with other colleges, such as government reforms of curriculum and assessment. Curriculum narrowing in schools has contributed here to a 20 per cent drop

in the number of students taking food and hospitality courses. Then, there are those that are accentuated, depending on your locality, your catchment, your place in our fragmented education system.

In the bottom 10 per cent of areas in the country for social mobility, Norwich has a complex demographic. In its highest ward by economic indicators, 86 per cent of children achieve five good GCSEs, including English and maths. In its lowest, only 26 per cent achieve the same results. The city's average is 44 per cent.

"It's not an easy place to work," Julia Buckland, the vice-principal for curriculum and quality, says, "but it is a great place to work". Sitting next to her, Jerry White, the deputy principal, explains that they need to hire the Norfolk County showground and close most of their main site to administer resits for 1,200 students, close to a third of whom have additional needs. "We have 450 students with educational health and care plans (EHCPs) in our 16-to-18 cohort," he says, "an equivalent of 12 EHCP reviews a week."

Helen Richardson-Hulme, the assistant principal for student services, talks of the number of students who are, or are children of, asylum seekers, and the legal ramifications of providing for them. White also cites students excluded from sixth forms because they haven't achieved high

enough grades.

Each example is devoid of any sense of excuse or blame. In fact, Ed Rose, the higher education and apprenticeships director, presents them as a benefit. "It keeps the challenge fresh and the collaboration strong." When I tell him that this attitude isn't a given, he shrugs and smiles.

A key refrain throughout the day, and I sense throughout every day at CCN, is that "there is only us!" All the staff are keenly aware that they are the last line of defence against an awaiting cycle of deprivation and hardship that is harmful to individuals and detrimental to their community.



City College Norwich



Aviation Engineering students

The second refrain I hear throughout my visit is that the staff are "custodians of a very long legacy". Just three years ago, Norfolk celebrated 125 years of having a college on CCN's site. It is an event this team took to its heart. Their passion for the college's community in the widest sense – its past and its future – is evident. A high proportion of the executive team is home-grown and there is real pride in White's voice when he tells me about the construction students taking part in a unique heritage project on the Norfolk broads.

This rootedness in Norfolk is central to the college's ongoing success. It empowers the team to make strong pragmatic decisions, such as valuing mergers on whether they will benefit the community, rather than as financial transactions or opportunities to grow for the sake of growth.

Rated "good" across all areas of inspection but one – "provision for learners with high needs", which inspectors deemed "outstanding" – it is plain that validation by external regulators is not what drives this college's executive. It is, if anything, an

added bonus for work that is its own reward.

"If 'outstanding' is the aim, what's your commitment to the long term? To the community?" asks Rose. "Outstanding' would be great for about a week. Then we'd be asking 'What next?'"

"Outstanding would be great for about a week"

Regarding the new inspection framework, Laura McLean, the director of strategic development, simply says: "It's business as usual." Her role is to be the executive's eyes on the horizon, to see and prepare for what's rolling in. I get a clear sense that Ofsted's big sea change this September is more of a ripple than a wave in this part of Norfolk. There are bigger fish to fry.

Four key leadership principles frame



City College Norwich Executive Team

They come first in Norwich



who have the space and trust to do their work so that he can do his. He is equally proud that all 250 NES staff are on the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) and haven't been forced on to a lower provision.

“We realised that inclusion wasn't limited to SEND”

They are shared too by Emily Staley, the president of the student union and full member of the executive team. She arrived from Adelaide in 2015, got her GCSEs, then her health and social care qualifications, and became the college's women's officer, leading a successful campaign to support young women in period poverty. Her passion for civic leadership awakened, she now sits as an equal in all executive meetings. Daunting? Yes. “But I can say what I want there and then.” She ensures, in her own words, that “students govern”.

Elaine Dale, the director of SEND support and college nursery, explains that these values and this language emanate from a “creative excellence” leadership development programme the college ran in 2010. “We realised quickly that inclusion wasn't limited to SEND, but had to be about a culture of inclusion for everyone.”

It isn't simply a way of working that a visitor encounters here. You



Corrienne Peasgood

walk into a culture. It has roots. It has had time and space to grow, to take wrong turns, to overcome challenges and to keep going. It reaches for the sky while nurturing its soil. I ask Peasgood, the chief executive, what she thinks the secret ingredients to her team's coherence and drive are. Her answer: “Success comes from culture. My job is to make that culture part of everyone's DNA.”

And despite her humility – because, in fact, of her humility – it is clear how she has achieved it. The belief in Norfolk's community and the language of “zero blame” are hers. Talking the talk is the easy bit, and walking the walk is harder, but for

Peasgood, it's important to go further still. “It's not just what you say, but how you say it,” she says. To lead like

“It's about a culture of inclusion for everyone”

that truly is a very visible high-wire act, and that's why you need a strong safety net. In her executive team, she has exactly that.

how this team operates: their “ways of working”, setting out parameters for professional communication, their high expectations that span everything from comportment to professional ethics, their commitment to the team (“not the one you lead, but the one you're in”), and their encouragement of entrepreneurialism and professional agency.

It is adherence to these that has led them to abandon all formal lesson observations, and to normalise instead an open-door and supportive culture of learning walks – and they walk the soles off their shoes! It's all part of an attitude to accountability that is reciprocal. The executive team regularly put out “You said... We did...” literature for staff and students alike. The results for staff are strong retention and low turnover.

But two fundamentals precede all else. First, shared values, chief among them their belief in their community. Second, shared language, the refrains and phrases they all speak.

These are shared by Martin Colbourne, the managing director of CCN's independent off-shoot, Norfolk

Educational Services (NES), which provides the group with non-teaching support services. He talks about the challenge of mergers being to rebuild morale with a clear vision. He is proud that his team is made up of specialists



City College Norwich's Debut restaurant



Performance at the Platform Theatre

News



Rayner refuses to rule out scrapping Ofsted under proposed National Education Service

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
NEWS@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Exclusive

Labour is “looking at all options” for an overhaul of the school and college accountability system, including replacing Ofsted, Angela Rayner has said.

In an exclusive eve-of-conference interview with FE Week’s sister paper Schools Week, the shadow education secretary repeatedly refused to rule out scrapping the inspectorate and replacing it with a new system to hold education providers to account.

Rayner said the idea of replacing the watchdog, a move favoured by the influential National Education Union, had been discussed by Labour’s national policy forum and that “various different options” are being considered by the party as it prepares to flesh out its plans for a National Education Service.

Despite having been announced as a flagship policy by Jeremy Corbyn during his first leadership campaign in 2015, the National Education Service is still little more than just an umbrella

term for a series of existing policies including free education “from cradle to grave” and scrapping the GCSE English and maths forced resits policy.

The second of two consultations held to feed into Labour’s plans focused on accountability, and it was common knowledge that party policy advisers had been looking at the future of Ofsted.

“I think the system drives bad practice at the moment”

Rayner said the idea of abolishing Ofsted “is something that’s come out through the policy forum”.

“Obviously people have views across our party on that and we’re looking at all options at the moment,” she said.

“I think [the system] drives bad practice at the moment, and I don’t think it’s Ofsted that does that, I think it’s the politicisation through the DfE’s politicians who have done that.

“I do think there are issues with the current set-up – with Ofsted – and we

are looking at that and in the near future I’ll say more on it.”

The National Education Union has long called for the scrapping of Ofsted. Its joint general secretary Mary Boustead has repeatedly warned that the inspectorate has become a “weapon of fear and terror”.

Asked what Labour might put in place instead, Rayner accepted some form of accountability system was needed.

“Parents need to feel confident and I will need to feel confident that our state system is performing to the best of its ability so we recognise we need a system in place, but we also recognise there are current weaknesses in the system.”

Rayner, who has now been in her job for more than three years and served opposite four secretaries of state, is unapologetic about the time taken to develop firm plans for the NES.

“I think the responsibility of creating something as radical as the National Education Service means you have to be evidence-based,” she said, pointing to the “huge amount of information” available “just on further education, tertiary education

alone”.

“I could spend 10 years doing a PhD on it and not get through the literature, so I think it’s entirely responsible to do what we’ve done” she added, and pointed to Labour’s lifelong learning commission, “which will report shortly”.

Rayner continued: “There’s so much we’ve already done, and so much for us to achieve, but it’s right to do it in a way that’s based on evidence, so we don’t undermine the principles of what we’re trying to achieve before it even gets off the ground.

“The inspectorate has become a “weapon of fear and terror”

“It’s very simple. It’s a national education service, free at the point of use, from cradle to grave. I think most people understand that.

“The question is, when you get in the weeds, everybody wants to talk about every fine minutiae of what it means to them at that point, and I totally



Angela Rayner

understand that, and I welcome the discussion and value people’s opinion on that, and we will continue to move towards that.”

The shadow education secretary confirmed Labour would come up with updated education spending plans for its next manifesto.

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Closing date for applications is **Monday 30 September 2019**

Interviews will be held on **Thursday 3 October 2019**



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.



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

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The closing date for applications is midnight Sunday 29 September 2019

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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.

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EDITORIAL



Stella brings shame on the college sector we all love

On Friday Highbury College, to avoid being in contempt of court, finally emailed *FE Week* the corporate card expenses for their principal, Stella Mbubaegbu.

Chief reporter, Billy Camden, analysed over 500 scanned receipts from the last four years and found £150,000 of shocking spending.

The college then defended it all, including: the cocktail fuelled lobster dinner for four at a Michelin Star restaurant in London; to the \$56 bottle of wine and \$50 steak dinner for six in Orlando; the Cadillac and executive taxis; the \$528 headphones from an Apple store in Washington; stays in five star hotels; first class rail and flights and as if in a two fingers up to the rest of us; a book called *Check The Ego: Operate with a high degree of humility by admitting mistakes and taking responsibility*.

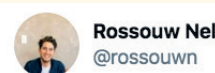
They college board has, according to their minutes from the meeting in May,

now told Stella she needs to be "more visible within the college". I think she needs to apologise to the sector she has tarnished, pay back from her own pocket any spend deemed by the FE Commissioner to be inappropriate or lavish. And far from being in the college more, she should then quit, like Asha Khemka did at West Nottinghamshire College, without taking a penny of severance pay.

Speaking at a conference in South Africa in 2017 Stella is reported on twitter at the time (see right) to have been talking about funding challenges at colleges and said "we don't have any money, now we have to think".

Over to you Stella...

Nick Linford, Editor
news@feweek.co.uk



Rossouw Nel
@rossouwn

"We don't have any money, now we have to think." I'm at #nsconf2017, hearing @StellaMbubaegbu speak about funding challenges at colleges.



Stella Mbubaegbu CBE

11:07 AM · Jul 31, 2017 from Cape Town, South Africa · Twitter for Android

4 Retweets 6 Likes

Readers' reply



EMAIL



TWITTER



FACEBOOK



WEBSITE

"What if FE had a transfer window?" asks Dr Sam Parrett

Just a couple of immediate responses to an interesting piece:

1. The football market is 'defined' by the activities of agents. They dictate the scale of transfer fees, the pace/velocity of the market etc. Notwithstanding hefty commission. Do current agencies for staffing become the new agents/commodity brokers? That led on to my second point;
2. The ownership of players/lecturers. There are options to the current system of college 'ownership', e.g. third part ownership, even by a private company (it's not a far cry from the current activities of high-profile agencies for contract staff) or centralised 'public/government' ownership. Corbynistas might like it/see it as 'nationalisation'. It is a centralised model, a civil service of lecturers

if you like, but despite its apparent rigidity it would enable deployment/mobility possibly easier than a pure market model.

Bill Wardle

DfE exceeds 2.3% public sector apprenticeships target - again

So it should do. If they can't, then who can? DfE ministers need to push harder on departments that don't make this relatively modest target for apprenticeships.

Gordon Marsden MP

Recruitment drive as ESFA cracks down on compliance

Those who cheat the system results in the rest of us being viewed with suspicion and subjected to greater scrutiny and more lengthy funding rules. We do our utmost to be compliant but these rogues have no scruples when it comes to lining their own pockets. Makes me so angry.

Lesley Ellis

As a point of clarity, independent training providers have, to my knowledge, always only had two weeks' notice of audit (although this remains negotiable if, for example, staff are on leave) and three days to find the sample, this is not a new rule. There is no evidence yet that grant-funded colleges will be audited in-year.

Steve Hewitt

160 employees already!!!! And still this level of abuse? How do providers get on the list in the first place?

Maybe a target of 3m hasn't helped?

Bob Harrison

Not before time, this has to be good for honest tax payers. It might be an opportunity, think I've seen most tricks by some (not all) greedy and arrogant providers whilst working in quality and compliance so might consider an application.

Midge

REPLY OF THE WEEK

"What if FE had a transfer window?" asks Dr Sam Parrett

When we set up our business 25 years ago we were primarily delivering a 'customer service/business admin' model, to existing clients that we had developed over our first two years. Now, we offer a wide range of qualifications and training from food manufacture to health and safety, learning and development, management qualifications and the like.

There are two of us in the business - as there always were. The secret? We have constantly reinvested our earnings into our own skills development, so that we can offer a wider range of learning opportunities. So, instead of blowing the budget on recruitment agencies, why not create a clear skills path for your staff?

Is a management trainer (say) always going to do the same job? What about the motivation of this person? Are they motivated by the pension, somewhat down the line? Is this impacting upon programme delivery and outcomes?

It used to be called 'multi-tasking' back in the day, but does this merit a thought? It would be a lot cheaper and better management, in my view, to develop embedded staff rather than shuffling them off to a strange and challenging environment that may not be as easy a commute, where they would lose trusted support and have to be the 'new kid in class'.

I can see the idea and its merits, but it's people we are talking about, and it does not necessarily guarantee that a good performer in one team is a good or better performer in another.

The football transfer history tells us that are more failures than successes. I'm a Man U fan, and I could draw up a long list!

Philip Gorst, website

Experts

ROD BRISTOW

President,
Pearson UK

Rethinking education in the era of the talent economy

A learner-driven revolution in education is unfolding around the world, says Rod Bristow, as Pearson launches its inaugural Global Learner Survey. The new study captures the opinions of learners worldwide, but are we ready to hear them?

Technology, automation, globalisation and an unpredictable political environment are affecting everything about our world – especially work and education.

To meet the demands of this new world of work and a fast-changing economy, learners tell us they are in turn demanding more from traditional institutions that have shaped learning for generations, and are looking for a different approach to education that is more practical, hands-on and skills-based to help prepare them for the changing environment.

Pearson conducted a survey of over 11,000 learners in 19 countries across the world, including both developed

and emerging markets. It provided learners with the opportunity to voice their opinions on the current and future state of education. We believe it is the first time the collective voice of global learners on such a wide range of education topics has been heard.

“It is the first time the collective voice of global learners has been heard”

Around the world, learners still place a great deal of faith in education to help them achieve success, but the way they are obtaining an education is changing, and it is all because the new talent economy has arrived with gig jobs, unconventional career paths and

tech disruption.

This opens a new universe of opportunities to help people learn in more accessible and affordable ways, and with better outcomes. The learners in our survey embrace technology and online learning. They want more career-focused education, soft-skills training and bite-sized learning across the course of their lifetime.

Virtual learning, micro and stackable credentials, and on-demand learning for everyone can help meet the needs of today's sophisticated learner. Governments, educational institutions, employers and social and tech disruptors are uniquely positioned to apply their vast and unique expertise to help drive this change.

The smartest of these innovators already know what the learners in our survey have said: traditional career paths are increasingly outdated.

With increasing pressure for education to deliver learning and employability outcomes, learners

want colleges and universities to offer opportunities to develop softer skills and more choices for adult learners.

There is a huge opportunity here for FE colleges to grow, evolve and provide services for a whole new generation of learners who need education over the course of their lifetime.

Universities are well positioned to use their vast expertise to re-imagine the learning opportunities they offer with online courses and degrees.

“There is a huge opportunity here for FE colleges to grow and evolve”

More employers now see education as an employee benefit, like healthcare for example. Career-focused learning,

like BTEC, is providing people with more options than ever before when choosing their career pathways.

But we cannot stop there. We need to build a wider ecosystem to meet the needs of the learners in our survey. Colleges and universities should expand access to mid-career adults with short courses, soft-skills training and stackable credentials. Employers should be working with them to re-skill more of their workforce. We should use technology to make education engaging and accessible, and government must help address ways to make education more affordable and widely available. Most importantly, we need to better understand the learner voice.

Learners are clear that they value their education but are exploring a variety of options to get it. The advances of the 21st century have given us the greatest opportunity in human history to improve lives through education. Our survey starts this conversation, but there is still a long way to go.

JOHN COPE

Head of Education
& Skills policy, CBI

The government must take steps to reform the apprenticeship levy

Government policy on apprenticeships is not working as intended, says John Cope. What's needed is further (and urgent) reform

Employers invest more than £44 billion a year in training and are, more than ever, passionate supporters of apprenticeships. They all agree that the apprenticeship levy helps to plug skills gaps, especially given the focus on delivering more of the high-quality training that firms need to succeed.

But it's two years since the levy was introduced and apprenticeship starts are down 31 per cent. It's clear that government policy is not working as intended, especially for young people and smaller firms.

Common problems hold many firms back, such as small, independent companies going to local training providers and being told the money has run out, to large levy-paying employers struggling with the complexity and inflexibility of the system.

Despite its rocky start, employers want to support the government's efforts to evolve the system and play their part in making the levy work. That's why this week, the CBI published a new report, *Learning on the job: Improving the apprenticeship levy*, outlining four urgent steps the government must take to reform the system and make the apprenticeship levy a success.

First, firms rightly expect transparency around levy receipts and expenditure. They are confused and crying out for clarity on how their levy funds are being used.

They read speculation in the papers that the levy is overspent, but are themselves struggling to utilise their levy funds for training – something that feels totally paradoxical. It's essential to be more open with employers about how the levy system is working, what's being funded, and how their contributions are being spent. This includes clarity on levy money covering

the apprenticeship provision for non-levy payers.

Second, companies want the apprenticeship levy system to become more user-friendly – whether that's helping smaller businesses switch to the National Apprenticeship Service,

“Making the levy sustainable is becoming more and more urgent”

or much better guidance on the 20 per cent off-the-job rule so it doesn't act as a barrier.

The CBI also wants more locally-led “matching services” that allow large firms to pass on levy funds to their supply chains where appropriate.

In the West Midlands, local leaders are already making those crucial

connections between SMEs and levy-paying firms. Since the initiative launched in March, large firms have supported more than 70 apprentices in the region.

In Greater Manchester, the combined authority has set up an online portal to link smaller businesses short of the necessary capital to invest in training with big local employers with the capacity to help.

There is no reason these successful projects can't be replicated.

Third, given the financial press on the levy, making it sustainable is becoming more and more urgent. By introducing an immediate £100 million annual government top-up to the levy budget, employers can continue using the scheme in the short to medium term to take on apprentices of all ages and skill levels.

Without this, there's a serious risk that the status quo can't be sustained. Uncertainty is starting to undermine confidence in the apprenticeships

brand with the potential, if it continues, to make employers rethink their programmes.

Finally, companies want the government to launch the public consultation promised in last year's budget about the levy's future. Reform was initially scheduled for 2020. That is just three months away.

Many companies want the apprenticeship levy to broaden into a more flexible “skills levy” to allow them to deliver more high-quality training that helps to grow their business and gives people successful careers. Such a change would involve an honest conversation, given the potential trade-offs and funding issues. That conversation needs to be had.

Without this urgent action set out in the CBI's report, especially on transparency, the apprenticeship levy risks becoming a roadblock to the government's wider and welcome efforts to modernise the skills system for employers and employees alike.

BART SHAW

Head of Policy, The Centre for Education and Youth



Bring in the reinforcements: how parents can raise aspirations

Parents are the most important influencers when a student decides about higher education, says Bart Shaw. It's time to get them on board

As enrolment season ends and students get into the groove of their courses, keen eyes will already be looking to the horizon for what comes next. Efforts to support students from under-represented groups into higher education need to start early, and they need to be well-focused and evidence-based.

But competing pressures – not least dramatic budget cuts across the sector – make that job increasingly challenging. It's time to call in the reinforcements.

When it comes to students' decisions about HE, our research shows that parents are the most important influencers. Students are looking for advice that takes into account their own personalities and that is grounded in a deep understanding of what might suit

them as individuals. Unsurprisingly, family members are best placed to do this. Advice from external sources is less likely to hit the mark.

Over the past few years, we have spoken to hundreds of students about their next steps. They have consistently emphasised that their parents are their most trusted sources of information and often the “makers or breakers” for students weighing options. Students in Teesside, for example, explained that their sense that colleges or universities are “selling” HE courses was a major turn-off.

Many parents can hold sceptical views about HE, sometimes based on misconceptions. Our 2018 report on parental engagement with university outreach showed that although most, regardless of socio-economic group, want their children to go to university, they also have deep fears about debt, living costs and employment prospects.

While colleges can and should address gaps in students' knowledge

about HE, the messages students receive at home will either reinforce or undermine any such efforts. That is why it is crucial to work with parents to understand their concerns and develop their knowledge. This is particularly the case when working with students

“The solution to the problem of widening participation is standing on our doorsteps”

whose parents do not have first-hand experience of HE. Colleges should think about three main things.

First, they should help parents plan ahead for conversations about HE. There's no better time than the present to provide basic information

about pathways their college courses might lead on to, and the basics about the language of HE. For example, what is an apprenticeship? What are the differences between different levels of apprenticeship? What is the difference between HE and FE? What is the difference between a foundation degree and other degrees? What do BA and BSc mean?

Next, colleges should provide detailed support around some of the things parents worry about most. Gaps in knowledge about finance, living away from home and job prospects can drive inequitable access further down the line.

Colleges therefore need to address common worries such as whether students will struggle to complete their HE course if they take part-time work, or the perceived pressure from student debt to take a low-paid job after graduation.

Finally, and perhaps hardest of all, colleges should work with universities

to make sure parents are included in widening participation activities. Visits to universities should include an option for parents to come along where appropriate, and colleges can work with universities to offer parents' sessions within the college.

The University of Bath, for example, builds activities for parents into its outreach programme, and provides contact details to allow parents to access advice at times that suit them. Given many low-income parents' unpredictable and complex work patterns, such opportunities need to be offered many times throughout the day.

The solution to the problem of widening participation is standing on our doorsteps. Supporting students in their decision-making around HE means supporting their parents at the same time. It might mean doing some things differently, but with parents fighting on our side, there's no destination on the horizon that can stay out of students' reach.

The value of Higher Technical Education (HTE)

The Level 4 and 5 higher technical education (HTE) space has been the subject of much attention in recent months, with the Department for Education's Review of Level 4 and 5 Higher Technical Education (HTE) highlighting the great potential of and need for this type of education. The government is focused on strengthening this landscape to support UK productivity needs, and have recently released a consultation outlining their proposals for how to do this, with a focus on employer recognition for HTE to support student progress into careers, and the role of FE colleges, National Colleges and Institutes of Technology in delivering a high-quality learning experience.

Pearson recognise and support the value of Level 4 and 5 higher education and have a long history of supporting and developing education in this space. The BTEC Higher Nationals (HNs) represent the best in HTE as defined by the DfE in their 2017 action plan (Post-16 technical education reforms T level action plan October 2017). BTEC Higher Nationals are designed to support a broad range of learners, including older age groups, into higher level skilled occupations. They are developed with employer guidance and input at all stages and also align with



Higher Apprenticeship Standards in key technical sectors, further supporting employer needs and student outcomes. Wherever possible, professional recognition is also built into the HNs, either by recognition by professional bodies, or providing exemptions to professional qualifications.

As well as supporting the student journey to professionalisation and employment, importantly the HN route doesn't cut off progression opportunities for those students who want to continue their higher education journey after completing a HN via features that ensure students are prepared to progress directly into Level 6 study.

HTE can be very beneficial for students who undertake it. Recent research has shown that students studying on HTE qualifications in scientific and technical areas, like Engineering, can earn up to £5,000 more a year than people with degrees from many universities. The BTEC Student of the Year for 2019, Christopher Meredith, is a great example of what HTE can do for students. Chris is an HND Civil Engineering student at Leeds College of Building. He returned to college to study, and now communicates with project teams all around the world working for Jacobs Engineering. Chris's story shows how BTEC Higher Nationals can work to support student progression, bringing together employer, college and student benefits.

Partnering for growth - Commissioned Higher Nationals

So how do we work to meet the need for more high-quality HTE? Partnership is essential in delivering the best HTE qualifications and learning experiences. Pearson works with employers, professional bodies, FE colleges, the new Institutes of Technology, universities and students themselves to design the type of high-quality career focused higher technical education described above. And partnership in qualification development is



the model that underpins the Commissioned Higher National service. This service allows you to commission bespoke HNs to support you in meeting the HTE agenda and satisfying local employment needs, working with you and your local employer partners. We have worked with FE colleges and employers such as BMW and Tottenham Hotspur Foundation (alongside Hertford Regional College) to develop BTEC Higher Nationals to support training needs.

The Commissioned Higher National service offers:

- access to subject matter expertise across a wide range of sectors;
- support from a dedicated representative who will work alongside you throughout the development process;
- the option to commission full HN qualifications or individual bespoke units to meet local employer and skills needs;
- a bespoke educational product that has undergone a rigorous validation process, with involvement from industry partners.

If you would like to learn more about how Commissioned Higher Nationals can help you grow your offer and support your work with local employers please contact highernationals@pearson.com to start a conversation.



For more information, visit [qualifications.pearson.com/commissionedhn](https://www.pearson.com/commissionedhn).

Bulletin



Rachel Musson

Chair of audit (designate),
Education and Training Foundation

Start date December 2019

Concurrent job

Founder and owner, Positively Resourceful

Interesting fact

She has recently returned from a year-long sabbatical taking in over 22 different countries around the world



Diane Dimond

Managing consultant, FEA

Start date August 2019

Previous job

Principal and CEO, Petroc College

Interesting fact

Diane lived in the Charente-Maritime region of France for a couple of years



Peter Latchford

Chair (designate), Education and
Training Foundation

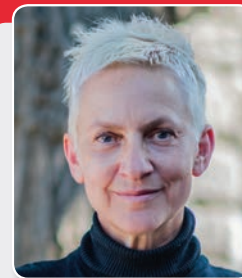
Start date October 2019

Concurrent job

Chief Executive, Black Radley Ltd

Interesting fact

He likes to oil paint in his spare time



Nicola Rosewarne

Subject leader for performing
and production arts, Plymouth
College of Art

Start date August 2019

Previous job

Programme leader for HE performing arts, City College Plymouth

Interesting fact

While playing the role of Persephone, she had to abseil down a tin mine, in the dark, wearing a ball gown and singing a Japanese Enka song

Movers & Shakers

...

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

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

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DIVERSITY AND CHOICE IN QUALIFICATIONS

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The FAB conference is the only two-day event aimed at those that are involved in, or have an interest in, awarding and assessment. By attending the conference you will:

- Hear directly from Government policymakers about the latest reforms and future plans in technical education and apprenticeships.
- Find out what practical solutions are being deployed that will help your awarding and assessment organisation be more successful.
- Learn about best practices in qualifications and assessment.
- Celebrate success in awarding and assessment at our popular annual awards and dinner.

SPEAKERS INCLUDE

Professor Martin Doel CBE, UCL Institute of Education

Sally Collier, Chief Regulator, Ofqual

Cassy Taylor, Director of Qualifications Policy and Reform, Qualifications Wales

Justin Edwards, Chief Executive, CCEA Regulation

George Brown, Head of Accreditation, SQA

Verity Hancock, Principal, Leicester College

Lucy Andrew, Deputy Director, Technical Education and Qualifications Reform Division Department for Education

Neil Carmichael, Former Chair of the Education Select Committee and Chair, The Independent Apprenticeship Group

Anthony Impey MBE, Founder, Optimity, The Apprenticeship Guide

Lucy Hunte, National Programme Manager – Apprenticeships, Talent For Care, Health Education England

Paul Eeles, Chair, Federation of Awarding Bodies

Tom Bewick, Chief Executive, Federation of Awarding Bodies

Fiona Summers, Director, Federation of Awarding Bodies and Chair of Federation's Regulatory Impact Group

Julie Hyde, Director, NCFE

Rob May, Chief Executive, Association of Business Executives

Jenny Patrickson, Managing Director, Active IQ

Vanessa Howell, Head of Professional Standards, Chartered Institute of Housing

Andrew Walker, Managing Director, TQUK

Cindy Rampersaud, Senior Vice President, BTEC and Apprenticeships at Pearson Education

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CONFERENCE, AWARDS AND EXHIBITION

DIVERSITY AND CHOICE IN QUALIFICATIONS

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2020
AWARDS



★ Nominations close 18:00 on Friday 1 November

NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN

FE WEEK & AELP AAC APPRENTICESHIP AWARDS 2020

A celebration of excellence in apprenticeship delivery

FE Week & AELP are delighted to announce the launch of the 3rd AAC Apprenticeship Awards.

These awards are designed to celebrate the contribution made by apprenticeship employers and providers in delivering world class apprenticeships.

For more information visit aacapprenticeshipawards.com

FE Week Sudoku challenge

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

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

Solutions: See right

Spot the difference To WIN an FE Week mug



Spot five differences. **First correct entry wins an FE Week mug.** Email your name and picture of your completed spot the difference to: news@feweek.co.uk.



Last Edition's winner: Ken Fisher

Solutions

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

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