

**PRINCIPALS REVEAL
'HEART-WRENCHING'
FE FUNDING CUTS**

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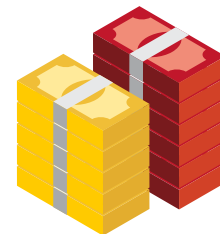
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**FE BILLIONS
PROMISED IN
ELECTION BATTLE**

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FE WEEK

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EDITION 298



NICDEX 2019
Supplement
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this edition

COLLEGE REVEALS SECRETS OF SUCCESS



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Exclusive interview with principal of Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group on page 4

'Pointless' pre-merger Ofsted inspections

- Principal on panel at AoC conference describes 'unfair' scrutiny - weeks before merger - causing staff sickness and 'risk' to college recovery
- Fears Ofsted is hindering rather than supporting FE intervention regime

Exclusive

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Rooney makes his WorldSkills UK LIVE! debut in Birmingham

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Ex-Greene King boss Rooney Anand spoke of his excitement yesterday as he made his debut as WorldSkills UK chair on the first day of the organisation's LIVE! event.

Anand told VIPs at a business breakfast at the Birmingham NEC, where the event is being held: "I hope, like me, you are very excited by what happens over the next three days in Birmingham.

"I believe passionately that business leaders must help young people fill their potential and WorldSkills is one of the very best vehicles through which we can do that.

"It is the only vehicle that captures and leverages in the field of skills building."

Anand took over from former WorldSkills UK chair Carole Stott in January. He stepped down as chief executive of Greene King after 14 years in April.



Dr Neil Bentley-Gockmann OBE

The businessman told those at the breakfast: "Our job here, all of us, is to help young people take that crucial first step on that career ladder.

"WorldSkills is unique because it brings together educators, business, government and young talent of the future – the whole skills system under one enormous roof. So together we can explore what we can all do to help so that young people get on.

"We don't just believe we make a difference – we do."

The sentiment was echoed by colleges that had stalls and activities running at the event.

Dudley College's curriculum manager, Dennis Stephens, told FE Week: "There is nothing greater than when you see them when they have won. It's fantastic."

The college has been involved with WorldSkills UK for "numerous years", Dennis said, and has competitors in hair and beauty and construction metalwork taking part in this year's national finals at WorldSkills UK

LIVE.

The finals are being used by WorldSkills UK to help find the team to take to WorldSkills Shanghai in 2021, where skilled young people from the UK will compete against those from other nations.

Dennis continued: "We have promoted WorldSkills within the college, we dedicate lessons to it and have got WorldSkills champions to spend time with the tutors." This is "really invigorating for them."

Dudley has taken 1,600 staff and learners to the show this year and he believes it is "worthwhile" and a "great experience".

He added: "The staff enjoy it. They volunteer to come down and do as much as they can."

Leicester College's digital and events team leader, Wajeeda Yusuf, said that her college got involved in WorldSkills as they believed "it was important to showcase vocational study, as well as academic study".

She continued: "There are some amazing competitions happening around the NEC at the moment and it's great for us to be involved."

Around 280 businesses are present at WorldSkills UK LIVE – including



Rooney Anand, the WorldSkills UK chair

the British Army, which has brought armoured vehicles, a live band and a climbing wall.

The British Esports Association is running live tournaments of the popular video game, Rocket League.

Halesowen College had a lively trade offering face painting for the throngs of schoolchildren who attended yesterday.

Ben Blackledge, deputy chief executive of WorldSkills UK, said: "Twenty thousand jobs, apprenticeships and training courses – all under one roof. This

is an exceptional opportunity for anyone looking to secure skills and a rewarding career.

"We want to give young people an inspirational insight into what their future career could be, and by working with the UK's leading employers, education and training organisations at LIVE they can access careers advice and see the skills they need to reach their full potential."

FE Week is the official media partner of WorldSkills UK LIVE and is providing live coverage from all three days of the event.

Skills leaders call for changes to T-level curriculum

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Two leading skills organisations have called for a rethink of the construction T-level curriculum ahead of the qualification's launch next year. They fear its current set-up is out of date.

It should be changed to include "commissioning and design" based on Design for Manufacturing and Assembly (DFMA) methodologies, which have been used in northern Europe and elsewhere for decades, according to WorldSkills UK and awarding body NOCN.

"The DFMA approach is based upon maximising the proportion of a building or infrastructure asset that is made in a controlled manufacturing environment and hence reducing the time on-site," a new joint report explains.

It adds that this concept should, ideally, be added to the T-level construction curriculum before its

launch in September 2020.

The two organisations launched their new report, Seeing is Believing: Accessing the World's Best Skills Innovations, on the first day of this year's WorldSkills UK LIVE event in Birmingham yesterday.

Graham Hasting-Evans, chief executive of NOCN, a specialist in construction curriculum after taking over CITB's assessment arm called CSkills Awards in 2017, worked with WorldSkills UK on the report having visited this year's WorldSkills competition in Russia.

He told delegates at WorldSkills UK Live yesterday that the "big thing" he heard in Russia was that skills systems have to be agile and to change with technology. The UK's system is neither quick enough nor agile enough, he added.

Whereas Hong Kong, which has around the same number of job types in its construction industry as the UK, was able to change its curriculum to introduce new technologies within 12



Graham Hasting-Evans

months, "nobody has a clue" how long it would take in the UK.

The UK has "missed the opportunity" on T-levels, Hasting-Evans said, and the government's flagship qualification is "not going to prepare us for the skills we need".

He added: "We need to rethink the structure and curriculum of the construction T-level if we are to drive

up productivity in the sector."

He said of WorldSkills Kazan: "There was a great opportunity to enhance and adapt the learning from other countries and build upon the progress the sector has made on skills over several decades.

"We need to increase productivity by greater use of digital and artificial technologies as well as a move

to a greater proportion of off-manufacturing (referred to as DFMA) for new construction."

Two other WorldSkills UK reports were launched this week, including one with the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) and the Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL), which studied best practice in four countries – Shanghai, Singapore, Russia and Switzerland – that have used skills to boost productivity and grow their economies.

The other is with the University of Oxford, which focuses on "mainstreaming WorldSkills methodologies to achieve world-class standards in the FE sector".

Dr Neil Bentley-Gockmann, chief executive of WorldSkills UK, said skills were the "most valuable national resource of all". He added: "We've got before us a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build the kind of skills systems that will teach all young people into the 2030s and beyond."

Interview

It played to our strengths: grade-one principal explains Ofsted success

BILLY CAMDEN

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From front

Exclusive

The principal of the first college to be rated “outstanding” under Ofsted’s new framework has warned that “you can’t hide anything” if you want to achieve the top grade.

Karen Dobson was celebrating last week after the publication of Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group’s glowing grade one report.

The feat was all the more impressive considering the group was formed through a merger in 2017, when Newcastle College was rated “good” but Stafford College was “inadequate”.

Speaking to FE Week at the Association of Colleges conference this week, Dobson explained how the inspection regime has changed and what it takes to be rated “outstanding” by Ofsted.

“There were quite a few differences, some expected and some perhaps not quite so obvious,” she said before describing the inspection as “intense”.

The watchdog’s focus has shifted from outcomes and achievement rate data to the “quality of education” and what is being called the three Is: intent, implementation and impact.

Dobson said it was “not quite true” that data had been completely forgotten, as she spent some time with the team of 13 inspectors over the course of four days looking at “historic data” that informed their investigation for the rest of the week.

She said the biggest change, which



Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group staff and students celebrating their grade one

“played to our strengths”, was the amount of time that inspectors spent speaking to people around the college’s campuses.

“As the principal you have an opportunity to say what you think the position of the college is and what your priorities are. There is then so much time spent talking to teachers, talking to middle managers, talking to students about impact,” Dobson told FE Week.

She said inspectors got “out and about” from 11am on the first day of inspection (Tuesday, 22 October) and they were still talking to staff and students on the Friday. This part of the inspection would have been “all done and dusted” by Thursday morning

under the old regime.

Dobson said this, and the fact that Ofsted had inspectors at both of their campuses in Newcastle and Stafford, was “really helpful”.

“So, for example, they looked at health and social care at Newcastle, crawled all over that. Then they went to Stafford and they found the same quality and teaching.”

The principal puts her college’s success down to their attention to the student experience.

“We have spent a lot of time, going back to the last academic year, talking about why they are doing what they are, why are they choosing these courses, choosing these option units, the order they are doing them, and getting our teachers to think about the curriculum more.”

Dobson said there was “little wriggle room” for colleges if they cannot show the intent and impact of their offer, as inspectors get “under the skin of everything”, including the subcontractors they work with.

“We don’t do a massive amount of subcontracting but they [Ofsted] did spend quite a bit of time both visiting and looking at the detail and talking to staff in those particular companies.

“That featured a bit more than I had previously experienced in any inspection framework. You can’t hide anything.”

Asked what she believes sets Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group apart from a grade-two college, Dobson said: “I think consistency in

terms of the way that we operate.

“There is very little difference between our two campuses, certainly in terms of curriculum approach, and I think we have done a good job of bringing staff and teams together.

“Particularly in parts of the geography where we operate, we have to be ambitious for our students. When they come to us, their aspirations sometimes aren’t that high and we have got to say, ‘Look, you are here, the world’s your oyster, widen your horizons.’”

Asked for her top tip to other colleges hoping for a grade one, Dobson said: “The intent features largely in the new inspection framework and I think you can’t do that in two weeks.

“So, whenever your next inspection may be due, I think you need to start today in terms of the work you do with your key talent, your teachers and your middle managers. That would be my advice.”

The principal admitted that there had been a “great big long list” of issues that needed to be addressed at the point of merger with Stafford College in November 2016.

For the 12 months before the merger it had nine “key” posts filled by interims, including the principal and finance director.

“We turned up at the beginning of September and there were no managers,” Dobson explained.

“Stafford had a period of problems: the investment hadn’t been made in

terms of training for staff, resources for staff, resources for students – and I think the focus on making sure Stafford was a great place to work and study had been lost somewhere.”

But Stafford did have “very good teachers” who were able to thrive once Newcastle College’s management took over.

“The nice thing about the inspection outcome is that Stafford staff as well as Newcastle are very much part of that end result. There isn’t a difference in the performance of the two sides.”

One notable aspect of the new Ofsted reports is that they only grade and discuss the whole college group, rather than commenting specifically on individual campuses.

Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group’s report, for example, mentioned nothing about Stafford College’s previous grade four.

Recognising this issue, particularly for the largest college groups with wide geographical spreads, the watchdog is looking to introduce campus-level grading next year, as FE Week revealed last week. But Dobson doesn’t see what benefit this brings to her college.

“I personally wouldn’t welcome that, but I’m sure people would say, ‘Well, she would say that wouldn’t she?’” Dobson said.

The Ofsted grade one was not Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group’s only celebration this week. It also came second in this year’s NICDEX (see page 7).



Karen Dobson

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News

CELEBRATE GOOD

'Amazing' students honoured at annual awards

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A learner with hearing and speech difficulties who also works as a carer for his twin sister is among the winners of the Association of Colleges' Student of the Year awards for 2019.

The gongs, which include Young Student, Adult Student, Apprentice and Higher Education Student of the Year, were given out at the annual AoC conference gala dinner in Birmingham on Tuesday.

Steve Frampton, the AoC president, said: "Each year the level of applications is extremely high, and it goes to show the fantastic work that students are doing in colleges as well as the lengths to which colleges go to support their students."

"They have done amazingly well to win and should rightly be proud of their achievements."

Billy Gibbons, from South Essex College, claimed the top prize for

Young Student of the Year.

Gibbons, who has profound bilateral sensorineural hearing loss, speech and language delay, developmental delay and an auditory processing impairment, achieved a D*D* in his 90 credit diploma in public services.

The student, who also helps as a carer for his twin sister, obtained a distinction in every assessment.

He recently went to Buckingham Palace to receive his Duke of Edinburgh gold award and has completed training as a fire cadet with Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.

The runners-up in the category were Sibgha Amin, from Stoke on Trent College, and Macy Sheil, from Trafford College.

The Apprentice of the Year award was won by Tia Whelan, from Leicester College. She completed a three-year plumbing course before starting her property maintenance operative apprenticeship at UK Gas, where she is the first female in the team.

She now takes on her own work

experience students and has visited 10 schools and colleges in the past six months to speak to students about the construction industry and promote the programme to female students.

Leicester College staff said that Whelan, who is dyslexic, was also working at distinction level.

Lauren Polson, from London South East Colleges, and Luke Leech, from Bournemouth & Poole College, were both runners-up.

Ryan Kimber, from the Isle of Wight College, beat Roxanne Willoughby, from the Northern College in South Yorkshire and Malcolm Thwala, from Hugh Baird College on Merseyside, to win Adult Student of the Year.

He achieved D*D*D* in his Extended Diploma Engineering level 3 BTEC after being diagnosed with brain and spinal cancer in 2016.

Kimber was headhunted by GKN Aerospace to design a project for their craft apprentices as a result of successful work placements. He also volunteers for the CLIC



Sargent charity.

Nicholas England, the college's chair, said: "It has been a privilege to see how much this young man has developed during his time at the college."

The Higher Education Student of the Year prize was awarded to Benjie Kusita, from Bradford College, who is studying for a BA (Hons) Media Makeup with Special Effects, ahead of Matthew Chilvers, from Loughborough College, and Henry Green, from Weston College in Somerset.

Earlier in the day Frampton announced a new prize, the president's award, to recognise those who have made a unique and lasting impact on the further education sector.

Students from Brockenhurst College in Hampshire were the first winners, in recognition of their work in the Love Our Colleges campaign.

The college's online petition gathered more than 70,000 signatures, paving the way for a debate in Westminster about college funding.

Three FE colleges win Queen's Anniversary Prizes

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Three FE colleges in England have been announced as winners of the Queen's Anniversary Prizes for 2018-2020 in a ceremony at St James's Palace.

London South East Colleges, Dudley College of Technology and Tyne Coast College were among the 22 education providers recognised in the awards. They were recommended by the prime minister and approved by the Queen.

The prizes will be officially presented by a senior member of the Royal Family in a ceremony at Buckingham Palace in February.

Dr Sam Parrett, principal of London South East Colleges, said: "London South East Colleges has a very long history of supporting technical and vocational education and this award is a real celebration of our work, reflecting our well-regarded and high-performing education group."

"It's also fantastic to be representing FE, showcasing some of the pioneering and innovative work that is taking

place in our incredible, yet often overlooked, sector."

London South East Colleges, based in Bromley, was chosen in recognition of the technical and vocational education on offer, including its "pioneering" of a strategic engagement programme within the construction industry.

Tyne Coast College, created from a merger of South Tyneside College and Tyne Metropolitan College, was chosen for creating digital scenarios that allow naval architects to design and implement projects at the South Shields Marine School.

Principal John Roach said: "Our 3D modelling team is in a field of its own in the UK in the expertise it has developed over the past two decades, and its achievements should be celebrated."

"We are known throughout the world for the strength of our maritime training, but this award gives us the global recognition we deserve in another field entirely."

Dudley College of Technology, the largest provider of advanced vocational and technical education and apprenticeships in the West

Midlands, was awarded the prize for "contributing to the economy of the region".

The college's chief executive Lowell Williams said: "I see this honour as recognition that further education can be the driver for economic regeneration, particularly of struggling towns in areas of the country that have been left behind by the under investment of successive governments, over many years."

"We never gave up on our vision. We took investment risks. And we always believed in the transformative power of further education. It goes to show so much can be achieved by so many people working together in one place for the good of that place."

A total of 275 prizes have been awarded to 49 further education colleges and 98 universities since the awards were created in 1993. They are granted every two years.

The only other college to win an award outside of England was Belfast Metropolitan College.

Sir Damon Buffini, chair of the Royal Anniversary Trust, which manages the prizes, said: "Colleges and universities



London South East Colleges celebrating winning The Queen's Anniversary Prize

throughout the UK do exceptional work year after year that delivers benefits well beyond the institution – positively affecting education, the economy and wider society in many different ways.

"The criteria are demanding, and competition is strong; it is a great incentive to our colleges and universities to think critically about the direction of their work and its application and relevance in today's world."

The 22 award-winning UK further and higher education institutions were recognised this time for "ground-breaking work and pioneering research" in a range of disciplines including science, engineering, education, the humanities, the environment and medicine.

Entries to the scheme are invited in any subject area and are subject to assessment in a process managed by the Royal Anniversary Trust, an independent charity.

TIMES...COME ON!

Refugees who fled war zones rewarded for transforming lives

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Refugees who achieved their qualifications having fled thousands of miles from home are among the 11 winners of the WEA 2019 Educational Impact Awards.

The awards recognise learners, tutors, volunteers, partners and staff who have “transformed their own lives and the lives of others through lifelong learning”.

Ten refugees and asylum seekers who completed their qualifications after fleeing from Eritrea, Sudan,

Yemen and Iraq were part of the outstanding student group at Science for ESOL Glasgow.

Seven of them gained SCQF level 4 and three gained a certificate of participation during their resettlement process, which the WEA says “gives inspiration to ESOL students across the country that there are different pathways available”.

Jo Cain, the WEA's deputy chief executive, congratulated the winners. She said they were a “fantastic example of how adult education benefits individuals, their families and the communities they live in”.

She added that the awards were “a

great way to recognise the impact of adult education”.

The winner of the Olive Cordell foundation student award was Hava Cil, who has been accepted to study PGCE maths at the University of Oxford after moving from Turkey and studying with the WEA to improve her English.

The outstanding regional partner award went to the Dolphin Women's Centre for providing women in Washwood Heath, one of Birmingham's most deprived wards, with creative courses and training and educational courses to support employment.

Frank Ferrie was presented with the award for outstanding tutor for his inspiring work teaching art classes to students including those with MS, dementia and mental health needs.

Cathy Kirk took home the Olive Cordell foundation tutor award for her efforts with an intensive ESOL programme with the WEA.

Anne Hollis was recognised in the impact in the local community category for being instrumental in starting Reaching Out art classes and widening their reach.

The WEA said: “At a time when



The winners of the WEA 2019 Educational Impact Awards

many classes are no longer running for students with disabilities, the programme has remained full and varied, with student success and progress at the centre.”

The social impact award was won by Adult Signpost Haverhill for “their inspiring work with adults who risked becoming marginalised and socially excluded due to mental health conditions”.

And the outstanding student award went to Sarah Marie Birks, who started with the WEA's Helping in Schools programme, which led to her getting a teaching assistant position. She is now

starting a BA in education culture and childhood.

There were also 12 regional award winners and WEA fellowships were bestowed on: Graham Hasting-Evans, NOCN group managing director; Stephen Evans, chief executive of the Learning and Work Institute; and Caroline Diehl, executive chair of Together TV and former chief executive of the Media Trust.

FE Week is the official media partner of the WEA 2019 Educational Impact Awards, which are part of the association's Adult Education Works campaign.



Several members from the outstanding student group, Science for ESOL Glasgow

Kendal tops college league table

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Kendal College has come out on top in FE Week's annual league table for 2019.

This year's NICDEX rated 172 FE colleges across England in four categories: employer satisfaction, learner satisfaction, 16 to 18 positive progression and adult progression into work.

The criteria are based on performance measures published by the Department for Education.

Kendal College in Cumbria took the title of top college with the highest overall average point score of 37 out of 40.

Principal Kelvin Nash told FE Week: “Kendal College is both proud and delighted to top the NICDEX league table this year.

“The college has a unique culture of support, ambition and maturity that is embedded in everything that we do, which means that our staff, students, and employers all work together in partnership.

“This whole college approach is why I believe we have been recognised as one of the country's top colleges, and for that I have to thank all the staff and students for making Kendal such a positive and enjoyable place to be.”

Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group came second in this year's poll with a score of 35. Abingdon and

Witney College came third with a score of 34.

Petroc was the winner last year, after knocking Exeter College, the 2016 and 2017 champion, off the top spot.

Kendal College scored highly in all of the four categories this year, securing 90.7 per cent for employer satisfaction, 89.8 per cent for learner satisfaction, 85 per cent for 16 to 18 positive progression and 66 per cent for adult progression into work.

Nash said every student was “capable of achieving great things”. He was proud that they have spoken so positively about their time at the college.

“We do everything we can to help

our students to excel in their studies, and prepare them to think about life after Kendal, and this is reflected in the fact that a high majority of our students now find themselves in sustained employment, further study or higher education,” he added.

The annual college league table, now in its fourth year, was created by FE Week editor Nick Linford.

“The NICDEX was an enjoyable intellectual challenge to create an annual performance table with an overall score, from a mix of key measures,” Linford said.

“Most importantly, NICDEX is transparent. The four measures that make up the NICDEX are published by the DfE.”



The full NICDEX supplement has been sent out with this week's edition.

News

Ofsted attacked for 'unfair'

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From front

Ofsted was criticised by an experienced turnaround principal for inspecting colleges just before mergers, at the Association for Colleges' annual conference this week.

Andrew Cropley, who has been involved with three FE commissioner interventions, said he had an "unfair experience of being inspected" and the education watchdog must find a better way to work with colleges during a panel at a workshop called "Balancing oversight, support and intervention".

He compared Ofsted to "Damocles [an allusion to the ever-present peril faced by those in positions of power] in a college in intervention" but reserved praise for the FE commissioner and was "confident" that the regime would prevent lack of action by leadership in the future.

Cropley was previously an interim principal at both Stratford-upon-Avon College and Cadbury Sixth Form College and is now principal and chief executive officer at Vision West Nottinghamshire College.

"Three staff went off with some mental health issues on the day of the inspection"

He was asked what improvements could be made to the college intervention regime, of which he said he had two criticisms.

He questioned why Ofsted inspections of colleges in formal FE commissioner intervention took place shortly before a merger and highlighted the impact of scrutiny on staff's mental health.

"What was the point apart from putting us through the mill?"

Cropley said: "At Stratford-upon-Avon College our report was published 56 days before it dissolved. Three staff went off with some mental health issues on the day of the inspection. What was the point, apart from putting us through the mill?"

The college was inspected in September 2017 and downgraded from a grade two to a grade three.

It had been told by the FE commissioner that it urgently needed to merge in order to survive after being bailed out by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. It merged with Solihull College & University Centre in February 2018.

Ofsted's approach appears to be at odds with its own policy, introduced in June 2016, that says "deferral or cancellation should, normally, only be granted if... the provision is due to merge, close or move and it is decided that no useful purpose will be served in inspecting it".

An example of this policy in action was revealed in December 2017, when the National Audit Office reported that Ofsted had decided to defer the inspection of Learndirect Ltd, the largest training provider in the country, as its "apprenticeships provision was about to move and there



Andrew Cropley and Kate Webb

was no evidence that learners' welfare was at risk".

Birmingham-based Cadbury Sixth Form College received a visit from Ofsted within six weeks of Cropley's arrival, according to the principal. He said he also had to "let go" the vice-principal, who was the nominee, in his second week.

"So we had an absolutely unfair experience of being inspected, we were just trying to help the college."

The college was under FE commissioner intervention. It was inspected by Ofsted in March 2018, received a second grade three and subsequently merged with Sandwell College in November 2018.

Cropley told college leaders, and the FE commissioner Richard Atkins, who was present at this week's AoC event, that an improvement would be to "find a way for Ofsted to be constructive if we can".

He added: "I suggest at every opportunity I have, really thinking about how Ofsted can work with the colleges in financial intervention to help them keep an eye on the quality as they are going through these horrendous cuts and challenges that they are having to implement.

"How they are supported and how their understanding... make sure that the quality isn't forgotten but isn't a publically pronounced verdict of a previous regime that then impacts on the lives and livelihoods of the staff working in that college."

His other suggestion for improvement was "consistency of FE advisors" and better "co-ordination of scrutiny" during college interventions.

"At Cadbury and Stratford we had the same people with us all the way

through the system and that was really, really helpful. That's not really the case at West Notts College.

"It is not terrible but I think it would have been more helpful if we had the same people all the way through."

Ofsted: We put the interest of children and learners first

Cropley added that, during the intervention at his current college, which has undergone a major restructure to make financial savings, the "learner record MIS team, between January and September, did not go for more than a week without some kind of external audit of what was going on in West Notts College.

"That is not good for their mental health and it is not good for us taking the organisation forward because they are completely overwhelmed – so understand the pressures.

"Inevitably in a financial intervention a college shrinks by about a quarter to a half where people are working hard and that scrutiny has an impact."

Kate Webb, group principal at the Windsor Forest Colleges Group, was also on the AoC panel and said: "We are living in a system at the moment I think where there is an increasing threat and risk of harm, and failure starts to feel catastrophic.

"We need to make sure we don't fetishise failure."

Webb added that she was trying to put the teaching profession "at the centre of what we do" and emphasised the importance of "the moral character and purpose of the organisation".

Cropley's experience of a pre-merger inspection of a college in formal intervention is by no means unique. Prospects College of Advanced Technology (PROCAT) went into formal intervention following a notice to improve for financial health in January 2018.

The intervention was lifted once the merger with South Essex College completed on 1 February 2019, but not before Ofsted had come knocking on 4 December 2018.

And more than two weeks after PROCAT was dissolved, on 18 February 2019, Ofsted published its grade three inspection report.

Ofsted was asked if it agreed that the colleges were inspected unnecessarily, and if it believed the supportive aspects of the intervention regime were undermined.

"We need to make sure we don't fetishise failure"

But, owing to pre-election restrictions, a spokesperson directed *FE Week* to Ofsted's inspection deferral policy published in June 2016, which says: "Ofsted puts the interest of children and learners first and it is only in exceptional circumstances that Ofsted would consider granting a deferral of inspection."



Richard Atkins

inspections before mergers

EXAMPLES OF COLLEGES IN INTERVENTION WHERE OFSTED VISIT SHORTLY BEFORE MERGER

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON COLLEGE

Mar 2017: FE Commissioner intervention

Aug 2017: Merger consultation published

Sep 2017: Ofsted inspection

Oct 2017: Ofsted publish grade 3 report
(previously grade 2 inspection in 2015)

Feb 2018: Merger complete with Solihull College & University Centre and retained the Solihull College & University Centre name and intervention ends

CADBURY SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

October 2017: FE Commissioner intervention and recommends merger

March 2018: Ofsted Inspection

April 2018: Ofsted publish grade 3 report
(previously grade 3 inspection in 2016)

June 2018: Merger consultation published

1 November 2018: Cadbury College merged with Sandwell College and retained the Sandwell College name and intervention ends

PROSPECTS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY (PROCAT)

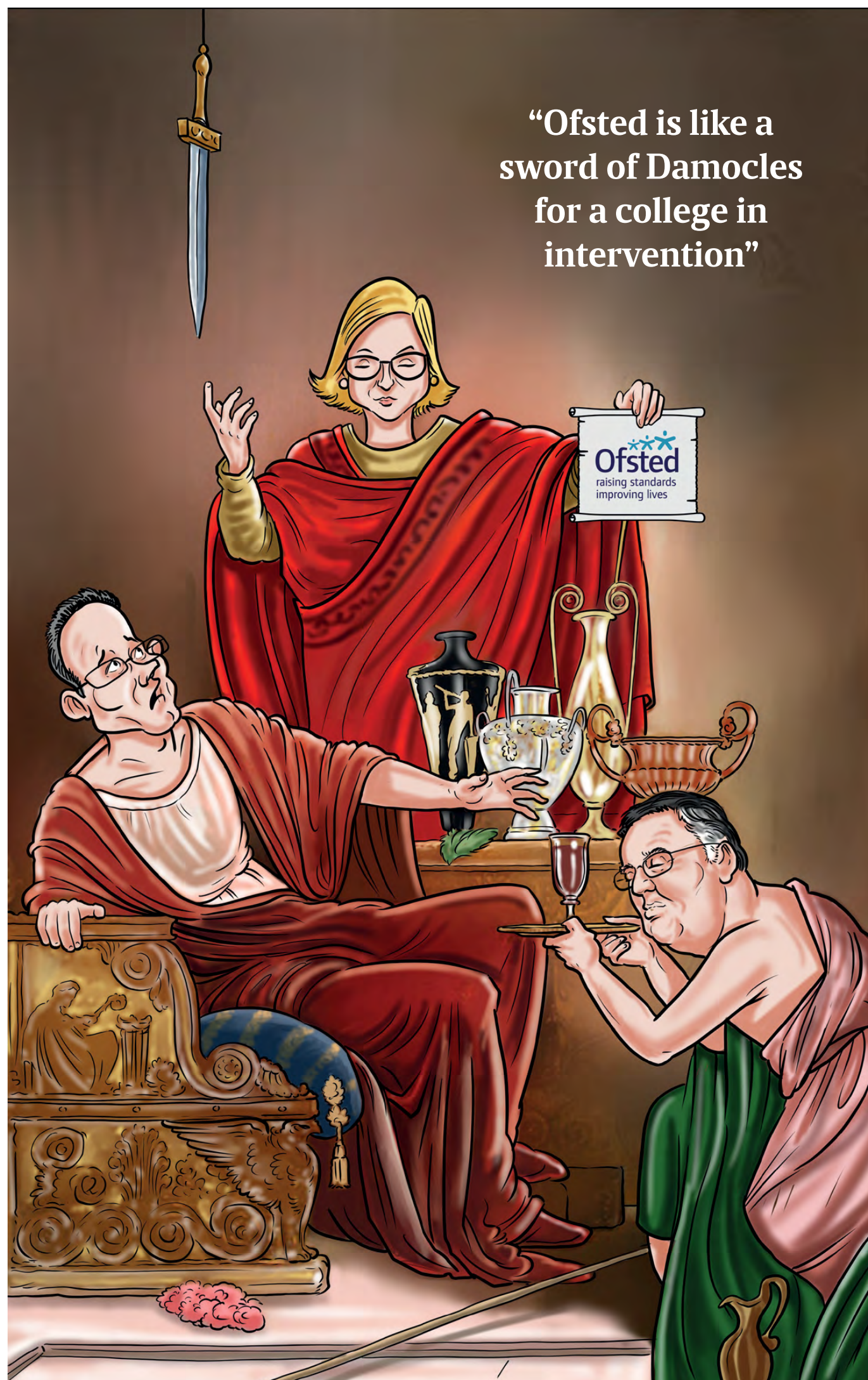
Mar 2018: FE Commissioner intervention

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18 Feb: Ofsted publish grade 3 report
(previously grade 2 inspection in 2016)



News

Labour promises more funding to 'make lifelong education a right'

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Labour has pledged to raise the base rate of per-student funding in FE to secondary-school levels and expand the apprenticeship levy if it wins power.

Jeremy Corbyn launched the party's manifesto at Birmingham City University yesterday ahead of the general election on December 12. The Labour leader vowed that the party would "make lifelong education a right" and "value technical education as highly as academic learning".

The manifesto said it was "more important than ever that people have the opportunity to retrain and upskill throughout their lives" with automation and the green revolution bringing major changes to industry.

If elected Labour would reform the apprenticeship levy by allowing it to be used for a wider range of accredited training, launch a climate apprenticeship programme and provide targeted bursaries to encourage the participation of women, black, Asian and minority ethnic people, care leavers,

ex-armed forces personnel and people with disabilities.

The manifesto added: "We will reverse the fragmentation and privatisation of further and adult education, incorporating it into a single national system of regulation that functions for education as our NHS does for healthcare provision."

It is not clear if this would mean that private training providers would no longer have access to public money or whether reversing privatisation would include apprenticeship funding.

Labour was approached to clarify the policy but had not responded at the time of publication.

FE Week previously reported that colleges' status as independent corporations could be at risk under Labour's plan for free lifelong learning in 2017, as the party wanted to bring them back under local authority control.

The Labour Party confirmed its intention to abolish the education watchdog, stating in the manifesto: "We will replace Ofsted and transfer responsibility for inspections to a new body, designed to drive school improvement."

It also said: "Labour will ensure fairness and sustainability in further education," outlining plans to provide dedicated capital funding to expand provision and reform existing careers advice.

In the accompanying Funding Real Change document, the party announced it will spend £1.4 billion on the restoration of the education maintenance allowance, equalising 16 to 19 funding with key stage 4 and the Union Learning Fund (to give workers the right to accrue paid time off for education and training).

The gap in per-student funding between secondary and 16-18 education was 9 per cent in 2017-18, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

The recommendations from Labour's independent commission on lifelong learning, including free key stage 3 and key stage 4-plus (training with maintenance grants for disadvantaged learners) and the restoration of English for Speakers of Other Languages funding, would cost £3.3 billion.

As Labour announced last week, it would introduce a free lifelong entitlement to training up to level 3,



as well as six years of training at levels 4 to 6, with maintenance grants for disadvantaged learners.

The manifesto states that all new spending, marked for 2023/24, is in addition to that announced in all previous fiscal events, up to and including spending round 2019.

Association of Colleges Chief Executive David Hughes praised the announcements. "The Labour manifesto offers a strong package for the future, with the potential to make real change, for business, for individuals, and for communities," he said.

"Their commitment to raising the base rate for 16-19 funding, offering a boost for adult and life-long learning, and the reintroduction of an education

maintenance allowance, provides a vision for a society that has an ambitious, people-centred education and skills system at the heart of it."

Mark Dawe, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, said apprenticeship delivery has a "key part to play in improving skills at all levels and we would be happy to work with a new government to see how reform of the levy can make a real difference".

However, "we have repeatedly said to Labour, the Liberal Democrats and other bodies that allowing the levy to pay for other forms of training would be premature, especially when current demand for apprenticeships by employers means that the levy is now being overspent".

VAT refunds and an extra £1bn in Lib Dem manifesto

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The Liberal Democrats have pledged to invest an extra £1 billion in further education, including VAT refunds for colleges.

The party would also expand the apprenticeship levy into a wider "skills

and training levy" and create a "young people's premium".

"Further Education is a vital route to learning and we will invest to support it," the Liberal Democrats wrote in their manifesto, which was published Wednesday.

The Sixth Form Colleges Association welcomed the £1 billion boost, which it believes will be used mainly to raise the

funding rate for learners aged 16 to 18. The SFCA has been using its Raise the Rate campaign to call for an increase from £4,000 to £4,760.

Bill Watkin, the SFCA's chief executive, said this would "help to ensure that colleges and schools have the resources they need to provide every 16 to 18-year-old with a high-quality education".

VAT costs for sixth-form colleges are an average of £350,000 a year, according to the SFCA.

The Association of Colleges (AoC) said refunding VAT would be worth £150 million annually to general FE colleges.

Watkin said scrapping this "learning tax" was the right thing to do as it means more cash can be spent on front-line education for students.

David Hughes, the AoC chief executive, said: "It's great to see another major further education announcement from a major political party. It is clear, whoever you talk to, that colleges play a huge role in answering the big questions facing the country."

The Liberal Democrats would also invest to clear the backlog of repairs to

school and college buildings "so they are safe places to learn in", although the party has not put a figure on how much this would cost.

The party wants to expand the apprenticeship levy to "help prepare the UK's workforce for the economic challenges ahead" by diverting 25 per cent of the funds raised from companies into a social mobility fund targeted at areas with the greatest skill needs.

New sector-led national colleges – to back up a major expansion of high-quality apprenticeships, including higher apprenticeships – also featured in the 100-page manifesto document.

These would be "centres of expertise for key sectors", such as renewable energy, to deliver the high-level vocational skills that businesses need.

They sound very similar to the national colleges launched by the Conservatives in 2014, one of which is surviving on a taxpayer bailout and looking at dissolving. Another has dramatically altered its offering after also receiving a bailout.

The Liberal Democrats want to

create a "young people's premium", which would be based on the same eligibility criteria as the pupil premium that schools currently benefit from, but a portion of it would be paid directly to a young person aged 16 to 18.

There is also their proposed skills wallet, which was announced last week. This would give adults £10,000 to spend on education and training over 30 years.

The party also proposes improvements to wider vocational education. Liberal Democrats would seek to "improve careers advice and links with employers in schools and colleges" to include skills for entrepreneurship and self-employment.

The manifesto also pledged to establish a student mental health charter, which would require all universities and colleges to "ensure a good level of mental health provisions and services for students".

According to the party's own costings, the Liberal Democrat promises for further education, skills and youth services would cost £1.6 billion.



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News

'Heart-wrenching' impact of funding

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Exclusive

Six college leaders have shared the "heart-wrenching" impacts of government funding cuts after speaking anonymously to *FE Week* for the first time.

We approached the principals and chief executives at this week's Association of Colleges conference, who revealed how they have had to cut back significantly on staff, pay and provision.

They, like anyone who works in FE, are fully aware that funding for 16 to 19-year-olds and adult learning has faced pressure like no other phases of education.

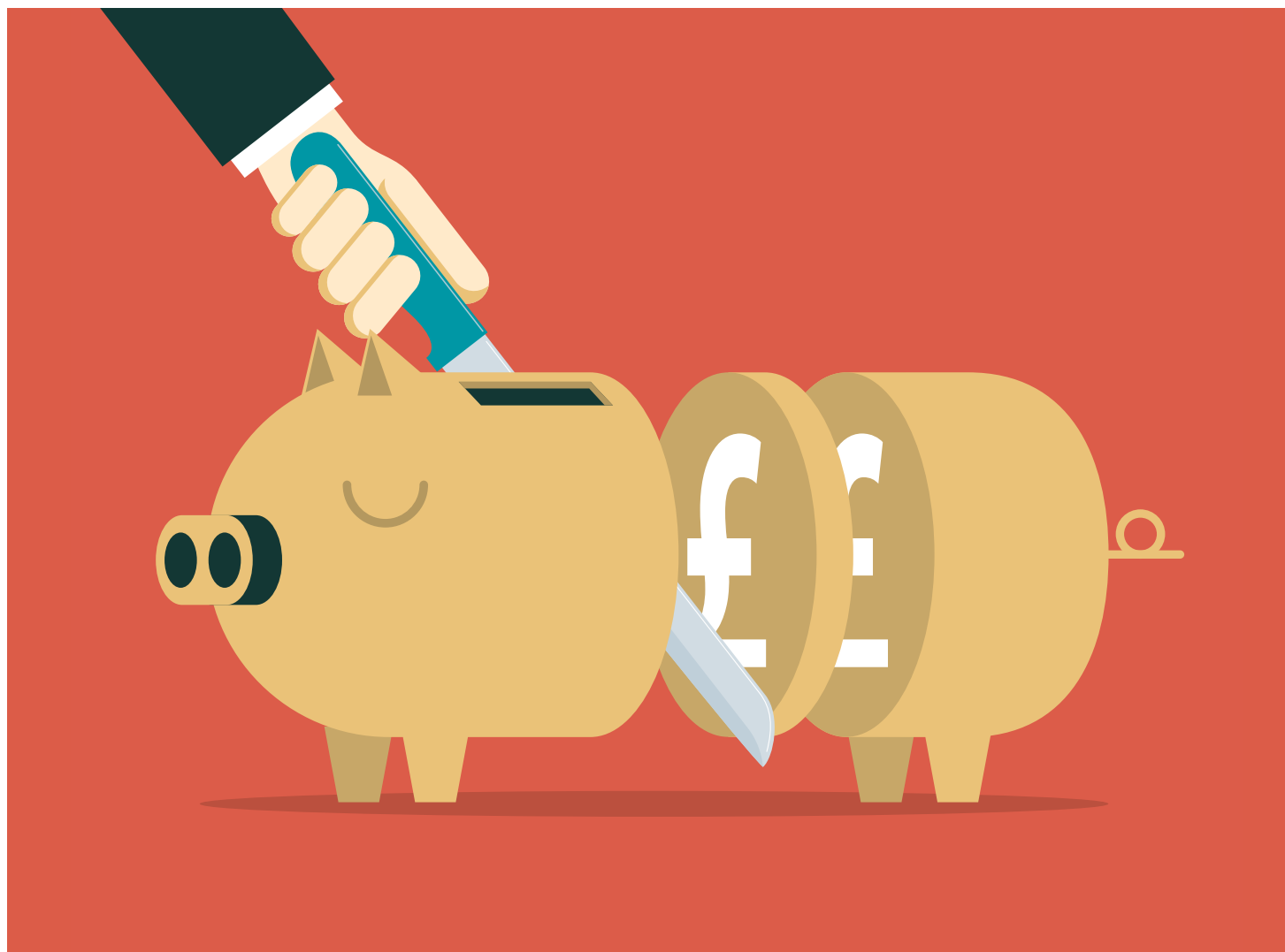
Between 2010-11 and 2018-19, spending per college learner fell by 12 per cent in real terms, after cuts during the 1990s and low growth in the 2000s, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

The economic research organisation has also found that funding for adult education has been cut by 45 per cent since 2009-10.

Politicians appear finally to be taking notice of this, with FE funding among the hottest topics in this year's general election campaign.

But college bosses, understandably, are often reluctant to share the true impact of these cuts with their institutions and learners out of fear of a bad press that could damage their reputations.

This is how college life is being affected:



College leader 1

Staff strikes have been rife in FE over the past few years, mainly because the funding crisis has left lecturers being paid £7,000 a year less than school teachers on average.

The head of a large college group, this leader said the most "critical" impact they have had to deal with because of a lack of government investment is not being able to offer good pay to staff, as well as struggling with the recruitment of teaching staff in specialist subjects.

"The cuts have not enabled us to continue to make progressive pay awards to staff. We're not able to be as competitive on salaries as we would want to be.

"Where we are trying to develop new specialisms, it is very difficult to attract people in, because you are constrained by affordability."

College leader 1 went on to say they have taken the decision to protect all areas of provision and the number of frontline lecturers, but in turn have had to cut back office and support staff, thus increasing workload.

"The challenge around that is workload and the wellbeing of those staff who are inevitably having to pick up more things than they would have done previously.

"So you cut out management posts, but unfortunately the work still has to be picked up. That is the other thing we have done: we have invested in a lot of process work to try and make systems more streamlined to try and compensate for there being fewer managers.

"But inevitably, again, you're foraging in an ever-decreasing circle of ways to make efficiencies."

They said that, over the past three years, their college has had to absorb around £5.5 million of costs "out of our business, of which probably a third of that is pay and two thirds is non-pay, to run more efficiently".

They added that the predicted imminent overspend of the apprenticeships budget and particularly the constraints around non-levy funding have led to them turning small employers and apprentices away.

"Most of our employers are small and medium-sized. We are not able to train them currently and the impact for us then is we have fewer apprentices coming through the system, which means less work for staff. We have had to cut staff as a result."

Asked what it is like having to make this kind of money-saving decision, they said: "It is really, really tough and I would say it is getting even tougher.

"For my colleges, we have done the things we needed to do that were around staff utilisation, curriculum efficiencies and you start to run out of more things you can do."

College leader 2

The uncertainty around FE funding has left staff feeling "vulnerable" and fearing for their jobs on an almost weekly basis, according to college leader 2.

"Ultimately we are human and, if we feel vulnerable and we might not have a job next month, then our ability to be at the top of what we are doing is considerably impacted," they told *FE Week*.

"And, if you think in FE, because we don't manufacture widgets, we are dealing with people, it is difficult for us to be genuine motivators and game changers for our learners when we ourselves feel so vulnerable. I would say that is probably the biggest impact of funding cuts."

They went on to say that, because of cuts, they have had to "take out the kind of courses that might not be as efficient as others: that is to say they are costly to run or don't attract massive numbers".

"Financially inefficient" subjects including creative arts, which require big spaces, art classes and land-based courses have all been dropped by the college in recent years.

These were "heart-wrenching" decisions to make because "colleges in their local areas are more than just education and training providers".

"They get communities to gel together and, when you have young people who are disengaged or worse still they engage in gangs, stuff like that, then society needs to engage them somehow.

"For this type of young person, generally education is not really the highest of their priorities, but you can potentially have a fighting chance if you could engage them in something they are interested in, so they can start to interact with society on a different type of interaction.

"The more you cut inefficient provision, the more you cut your opportunity to help those learners."

Asked if making decisions to reduce support staff and provision had got harder over the years, the leader said: "Perversely, no. You become numb and develop a way of doing it. It's heart-wrenching and it doesn't go away. In fact, I still remember in 2015 having to do something like this and I still feel it now – and I had to do some last summer.

"But what you do is develop a way of doing it so you just go into that mood, blinkered, body armour and it is really sad."

ing cuts shared by college leaders

College leader 3



Leader 3 said they have had to sacrifice vital adult education courses in recent years to ensure that their college stays financially sustainable.

"Some time ago, when funding was a little bit more generous, you could carry provision that was small numbers or allowed for progression but potentially wasn't viable for whatever reason," they told FE Week.

"I think, over the years of this static funding picture and increasing cost, actually you can't do that anymore. There are things you can't do, not because there isn't a value in them, but because they aren't making a contribution to the core stuff, such as adult community provision.

"The difficulty is it is very expensive to do that at a time where actually your funding rate is static for however long and so we haven't got anything like that now."

They explained that these are usually short courses in basic IT, for example, but "some might be just courses that are more enjoyment, perhaps photography or something like that.

"We've got only very small amounts of

that sort of provision.

"I often say that at some point somebody, a minister, might turn round and say 'where's all of the lifelong learning gone?' Obviously there is a big issue there."

"At some point a minister might turn round and say 'where's all of the lifelong learning gone?'"

Like college leaders 1 and 2, they said they were finding it "difficult to recruit in certain areas" as they "can't compete with schools" when it comes to salaries.

"For example, we can't get some of the maths teachers we would like and it's really tough to recruit a highly skilled engineer as you are competing with the wages of big businesses.

They said their college had a strict process of scrutinising "every staff vacancy" to "make sure we actually need that role".

They added: "We are conscious that, if you are adding to a pay bill, obviously that puts further pressure on the finances."

College leader 4



Increasing class sizes and huge reductions in teaching hours are two of the biggest impacts of funding cuts that this chief executive of a large college group has had to deal with in recent years.

"You used to have a class of, say, 16, but you're now having to do groups of 20 or 22 in order to make it financially viable," leader 4 said.

"That then puts pressure on the teacher because, instead of giving 16 sets of feedback to learners, you are now giving 22. So in some ways the student experience may not be affected but the workload on the teacher is that much greater."

They continued: "The other thing for me is, when I first came into teaching technical education, we had 1,200 hours a year. Now you are lucky to get 540."

They said the funding levels that colleges had ten years ago enabled them to "almost over-recruit some teachers so you had some spare teachers that could actually do project work or help teachers when they were new and coming in to really ease them in".

They added that there was no "fat" in the system anymore and, when lecturers are

appointed now, "you come in and teach straight away".

They added: "So some of the things which may seem like luxuries but really raise the quality of the learning experience are now not in the system because none of us can afford to over-recruit."

Additional support for students with high needs is another area that has been reduced because of funding cuts.

"The amount of support you give to certain students has to be thought of very carefully. Do you support a dyspraxia student for four hours or do you go, OK, everybody can have one hour's support?"

They continued: "Another issue I think we are all facing is the level of mental health support our young people receive.

"One of the things we are looking at, but it means that we will have to take the money from somewhere else, is educational psychologists, not just for students but to help teachers.

"Some of our teachers have been teaching for five years. The problems that they face with some young people they haven't faced before."

College leader 4 said they recently recruited someone from the NHS as a lecturer but they left after just a few months in the post because "they said it was easier to work in the NHS as the workload was less".

College leader 5



Leader 5 runs a large college group and said over the past five years they have had to cut some areas of "costly" provision, such as engineering, as well as delaying building work and holding back on investing in new equipment.

However, the main focus for their cuts has been "trying to get people to do more with less".

"There are times when I think, 'Why am I struggling this hard?'"

"We have cut managers and just enabled coordinators to do more. We have taken out administrative staff. We have tried to deliver things like 'support to learning' with fewer learning assistants because we just haven't been able to afford them.

"So, undoubtedly, I don't see how anybody could have lived in the financial

circumstances we have lived in for the past five years without the students being affected in some way because the provision that we have been able to deliver has been really, really difficult to do."

They said they had to take "£2 million out of our cost base this year" and "we lost money last year and we will lose money this year as well".

The college group gained planning permission for a new science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) building four years ago but it doesn't "have enough cash in order to launch it".

Some individual campuses in their group have "really poor buildings" which need a lot of money spent on them but they can't because "we don't have access to capital".

"We have got to stay financially solvent, so the limitation there is you stop investing. We have got areas that desperately could do with some updated equipment which they haven't got because you have to rationalise it."

They said they needed to be "very resilient as a chief executive" when making these tough decisions.

"I love my job, I love the difference we make to students, but there are times when I think, 'Why am I struggling this hard?' Because there are other things that perhaps I could be doing but would not be so challenging from a financial point of view."

College leader 6



Leader 6 claimed to have retained staffing at all levels and protected all areas of provision in the face of government cuts.

They said that good management skills have never been more crucial for college leaders and it was their "efficient" way of working that had enabled them to avoid making cuts where others have.

They argued that, as the only large college in a rural area that students could travel to, they "don't have the option" of withdrawing expensive provision.

They also said that they could not "cut a back office service and expect teachers to pick up what they were doing because you need to protect the frontline".

"To reduce people means you have to stop doing things. What you need to do is offer it in a more efficient and effective way," they told FE Week.

"It's about being as clever and efficient as you can be with funding that is out there.

"Go for projects that support business as usual, rather than projects that are going to be in addition to what you are already doing and can make us busy fools.

"Pick things that align to your strategic objectives so it is always moving you forward,

and be really clear on your strategic intent."

Asked if they would therefore say that the impact of funding cuts was that colleges are reluctant to take risks and work in new areas, such as institutes of technology, they said: "I think, providing you have got a sound business plan, it wouldn't prevent you moving into a new area. But that new area has to be aligned with where you think the college and the provision needs to go."

They continued: "I think it's about taking the long-term view and it's about looking at, OK, this is what we know now but this looks like it is on the horizon for next year and the year after.

"As a principal you have always got at least four or five years in your head.

"You are planning the next enrolment already because you have got staff out in schools talking to young people, talking to employers about what apprenticeships they need – but that is not enough.

"You are also looking at the following two years, when you are thinking, OK, in 2021, what T-levels will there be? What will they look like? What does that mean for teachers?"

"What curriculum changes have you got to make now to be ready for that? What does the workforce look like, and how are we going to find T-level industry placements?"

"If you have only ever got three years in your head – the last one, this one and the next one – you won't be successful in that. You really have got to future-gaze."

News

Sector unites to solve funding crisis for high-needs learners

FRASER WHIELDON

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Leading bodies within the FE sector have teamed up with local government to launch research into a crisis in special educational needs and disability (SEND) funding for those aged over 16.

In response to "massive pressure on stretched local authority high-needs budgets", a tender to investigate existing arrangements for the over-16s with SEND, and what constitutes good practice, has been published by the Association of Colleges, Natspec and the Local Government Association.

A Natspec spokesperson said new ways for colleges to work with local authorities in a "constructive way" needed to be found to make the "best use of available resources on both sides".

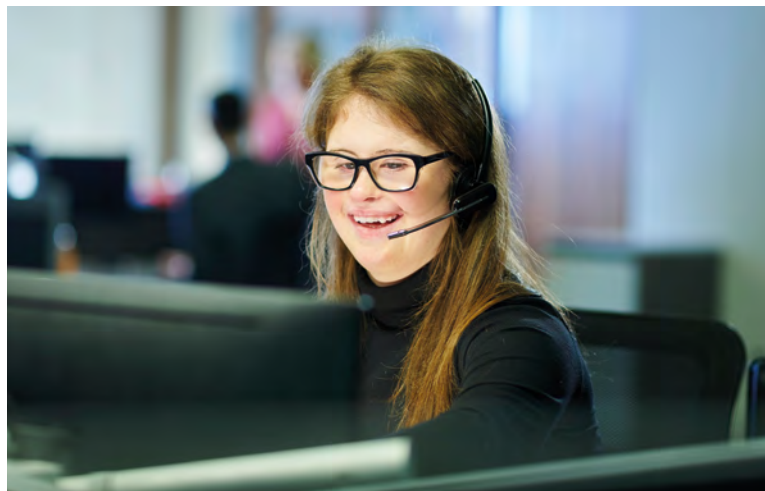
The specialist FE providers' organisation hopes the research "will help local authorities and colleges to

come to a common agreement about the FE SEND provision that should be available everywhere, and the more specialist services that would be more cost-effective to provide regionally or nationally".

Natspec also hopes that it will fill in the gaps about how councils commission high-needs education for those over 16 as "not enough work has been done on the current state of play relating to local authority commissioning of post-16 high-needs education".

The tender follows repeated warnings from MPs, college principals and the charitable sector about the health of the post-16 SEND system since the Children and Families Act 2014 extended local authorities' statutory duty to those with SEND up to the age of 25.

The parliamentary education select committee reported last month on how pupils with SEND were "faced with a lack of choice and inclusivity at college". Some colleges were reluctant



to put on courses for students with SEND as the funding was insufficient.

Their inquiry had heard from FE principals including Pat Brennan-Barrett, principal of Northampton College, who warned the committee that there was a "postcode lottery of funding". Beatrice Barleon, policy development manager at Mencap, said one of the challenges created by the act was "implementation across all the

different local authorities".

A Local Government Association report last year, titled "Have we reached a tipping point?", found their post-16 responsibilities, more than any other factor, were blamed by councils for cost pressures on their high-needs budget.

Julian Gravatt, deputy chief executive for the Association of Colleges said those recent reports

"confirm what college staff and students already know, which is that the post-16 high-needs system isn't working".

He added: "The system is costly to administer, is unpredictable and cuts off support to young adults too early."

An LGA spokesperson said of the tender: "Councils want to work with the next government and families and children with SEND to make the system work more effectively for everyone."

The Department for Education launched a consultation in May on how to improve funding arrangements for learners with high needs.

The government said at the time that it "understands the cost pressures facing both local authorities and post-16 providers as they seek to meet the needs and ambitions of young people, and the need for appropriate levels of funding".

The tender is worth between £10,000 and £25,000 and closes for applications on 6 December.

More robust approach to subcontracting could prevent outright ban, says AELP chief

BILLY CAMDEN

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The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) has called for a new, more "robust" approach to subcontracting in an effort to avoid an outright ban.

The practice of one FE provider paying another to deliver training has never been far from scandal and controversy. It has already been banned for advanced learner loan-funded courses.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) announced plans last month for a radical overhaul of its subcontracting rules amid high-profile cases of fraud, while Ofsted has launched research into the practice.

In what AELP describes as a "last-chance saloon" for subcontracting apprenticeships and adult education budget funding, its chief executive, Mark Dawe, claimed that "by incorporating the recommendations in our submission into

its rules, the agency can avoid ministers demanding a ban".

The association said the "vast majority" of subcontracting was "high quality" and officials must not take a "damagingly blunt" approach to address the behaviours of a small number of providers.

The requirement and expectations of main providers who subcontract out government funding should be "much more robust" in order to ensure integrity.

AELP has produced a checklist of the "minimum expectations" of the main provider, which it says is significantly above and beyond current ESFA rules and "should be adopted across the sector".

It includes: acceptable fees, charges and additional services; quality monitoring and quality assurance; MIS; audit and ILR services; and contracting management (read the full report at feweek.co.uk).

Sally Dicketts, chief executive of Activate



Sally Dicketts

Learning, said her college group subcontracts training out to three other providers and she warned against banning the practice.

She told FE Week: "My view always is: don't flip-flop. Because, if a system is doing one thing, be very careful how you move into another system because some subcontracting is niche markets where the work wouldn't happen and it needs to happen.

"I'm sure there is some subcontracting that isn't perfect but I wouldn't say ban subcontracting, I would do actually what the funders are doing at the moment, which is very tight rules and regulations around it, and then believe we will follow those rules."

Shelagh Legrave, chief executive of the Chichester College Group, said her group had been gradually cutting down its subcontracting arrangements in recent years, but insisted that there "is a place for it".

"There're small organisations, who could never have a direct contract because they're too small, with the ESFA for whom subcontracting absolutely makes a difference," she told FE Week.

"There are some national contracts being delivered where those companies

do it perhaps better than we can, because they are focusing on one particular subject area, one we couldn't invest in and to that extent I think subcontracting works."

AELP used its submission paper to again call for fees and charges not to exceed 20 per cent of the funding – a recommendation that has been adopted by the Greater London Authority and other mayoral combined authorities with devolved adult education funding.

According to Dawe, this maximum cap would "block the profiteering of a small number of providers who commoditise their privileged access to government funding and ensure value for money".

He said: "Recent examples of subcontracting malpractice do not justify at all a call for an outright ban on subcontracting in the sector, but a much more robust approach on the part of the ESFA and Ofsted would make a huge difference in stopping further examples occurring.

"Over the last ten years, AELP feels that the ESFA has rather dragged its heels in making the required changes needed in its funding rules to put the issue to bed and we are probably now



Mark Dawe

in the last-chance saloon."

Eileen Milner, chief executive of the ESFA, sent a sector-wide letter last month warning of rule changes to subcontracting and that she would take strong action against any provider that abused the system.

She said there were currently 11 live investigations into subcontracting, with issues underpinning them ranging in seriousness from "complacency and mismanagement", through to matters of "deliberate and systematic fraud".

DIRECTOR OF APPRENTICESHIPS



SALARY: COMPETITIVE
CLOSING DATE 8TH DECEMBER -
SELECTION DATE 18TH DECEMBER

The Role: The College is recruiting for a new and important management role in the Training at Hopwood Department. The post holder will lead on the expansion and delivery of the College's apprenticeship & workplace learning contracts, maintaining full contractual compliance.

What we can offer you:

A positive, inclusive and dynamic working environment within an aspirational college that has a proven track record of career development and a dedication to continuous professional development. You will be given the opportunity to demonstrate your leadership and will be supported by three Programme Managers to assist you in driving forward the college's vision.

For further information about the role and how to apply please visit: www.hopwood.ac.uk

To apply please send a CV and supporting letter to hr@hopwood.ac.uk

CENTRE DIRECTOR FOR TECHNOLOGY



SALARY: £46,827
CLOSING DATE: 8TH DECEMBER 2019
SELECTION DATE: 17TH DECEMBER 2019

The Role: As the Centre Director for Technology you will be responsible for a diverse range of vocational areas including electrical installation, electronic engineering, fire, emergency, security, mechanical engineering, brickwork, plastering, motor vehicle, joinery, plumbing and manufacturing/mechanical engineering. The role will involve managing the study programme, adult and apprenticeship provisions.

You will ensure the development and diversification of the curriculum within the Technology Centre and will have responsibility for key leadership management functions within the department, including teaching and learning, quality and developing external links with employers. It is also essential that you have experience of successful apprenticeship management.

What we can offer you:

A positive, inclusive and dynamic working environment within an aspirational college that has a proven track record of career development and a dedication to continuous professional development.

For further information about the role and how to apply please visit: www.hopwood.ac.uk

To apply please send a CV and supporting letter to hr@hopwood.ac.uk



Executive Director – Student Services and Support

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An exciting opportunity has arisen at Buckinghamshire College Group for an enthusiastic and motivated Executive Director – Student Services and Support. We are looking for a candidate with proven experience within Safeguarding, Prevent and SEND, and Foundation Learning & ESOL curriculums, who can improve and deliver the student services provision across our three sites.

The Executive Director – Student Services and Support will promote the vision and values of Buckinghamshire College Group, driving admissions and promoting the college as a nurturing, innovative, open and inspiring place to learn. While working alongside the Executive Leadership Team to deliver the

Strategic Plan and Business Objectives. Our staff are the most important resource that the College has in securing this success. We therefore value our staff highly and offer a competitive reward and benefits package, which includes TPS / LGPS, CPD, discounts across Buckinghamshire College Group Services and Shopping and Free on-site Parking.

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For more information visit –
www.buckscollegigroup.ac.uk,
email hr@buckscollegigroup.ac.uk
or call 01296 588604

Closing Date: Monday 2nd December 2019



Additional Learning Support Co-ordinator

Salary: Competitive

Are you motivated and dedicated SEND professional? Do you have specialist qualifications such as a Dyslexia qualifications? Do you want a job in a college dedicated to inclusion where you can have a positive impact in the lives of young people with additional needs? If so we would like to hear from you!

You will lead the Additional Learning Support Team to ensure that students with SEND receive outstanding support that promotes independence and achievement.

Your experience will contribute to the provision of key ALS processes such as transition, initial and specialist assessment,

the production of individualised Support Plans and EHCP annual reviews that show progress towards outcomes.

You will ensure the ALS service is fully compliant with the SEND Code of Practice and Equality Duty as applied to post 16 learners.

You will be educated to degree level or equivalent with a specialist qualification related to SEND. We are particularly interested in candidates who are qualified to test for exam access arrangements [EAA] under JCQ, for which an enhancement will be offered.

Closing Date: Friday 6 December 2019

Interview Date: w/c 16 December 2019

For further information and to apply, please visit www.lcwc.ac.uk/job-type/college/

PRINCIPAL

TRURO & PENWITH COLLEGE



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The growth and success of our College since 1993 and our merger with Penwith College in April 2008 has been remarkable. Our inspection in February 2016 confirmed our Outstanding status as one of the leading FE colleges in the country. Our reputation is excellent.

Due to the retirement of our current Principal, David Walrond, after 17 years outstanding service including 10 years as Principal, we are seeking an exceptional candidate with significant senior management experience to lead Truro and Penwith College.

Our new Principal will lead a committed group of staff in ensuring we maintain our Outstanding status and ensures the College continues to provide the best environment for students to achieve their potential. If you have vision, energy, determination and commitment to achieve excellence at one of the most successful College's in the country we would like to hear from you.

Closing date: 12 noon Friday, 29 November 2019

Interviews: Week commencing Monday, 13 January 2020

Visit truro-penwith.ac.uk/work-for-us for an application pack and further details or contact us on 01872 267000

We offer a generous package with benefits including 37 days annual leave plus bank holidays and College closure days, teacher pension scheme, relocation package, free on-site parking and a variety of on-site benefits and discounts.

Truro and Penwith College is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and young people, and applicants will be subject to full employment checks including enhanced DBS disclosure.



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For more information and a candidate pack see:
www.fea.co.uk/cfd/

Closing date: Friday 13th December 2019 at noon.



Director of Management Information Systems

Competitive Salary dependent on experience Full-Time

Bishop Burton College is looking to recruit a new Director of MIS, the college offers provision from Foundation level to Masters. In addition to further education the college has a large higher education provision and successful Services to Business division which includes apprenticeships.

The role requires someone who has previous experience of working in further education, work based learning or higher education sectors. The ideal person will be highly numerate, have advanced IT, analytical and communication skills, is confident using a range of IT tools and will work closely with the senior management group to facilitate effective corporate decision making.

The role will require leadership of the Management Information Team, which includes admissions. There is an expectation that the post holder will work with the Director of Information Technology and the Director of Quality and Standards to ensure data is used effectively across the institution in a timely way.

Bishop Burton College includes the Bishop Burton campus in East Yorkshire, the Riseholme College campus in Lincolnshire and the Lincolnshire Showground campus and the post holder may be required to carry out duties at all campuses.

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Closing Date 4th December 2019

No Agencies

The College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all staff to share this commitment. An enhanced DBS check will be carried out on the successful candidate. Bishop Burton College is committed to Equal Opportunities for all.

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EDITORIAL



Ofsted should explain in their reports why they come knocking just before a merger

It is extremely rare to hear a college principal openly criticise Ofsted.

So rare in fact, I felt it was only right to check with Andrew Cropley that it was ok to publish what he had said from a panel at the Association of College's annual conference 'hot topic' session on "the balance between oversight, support and intervention".

But after becoming something of an interim principal specialist, stepping in to several colleges in a financial crisis, Cropley had no concerns about speaking out.

As we report this week, he has been principal at West Notts college since July and praised the work of the FE Commissioner and his team (as an interim principal he also worked with them to complete

the successful mergers of Stratford-upon-Avon College and Cadbury Sixth Form College).

But when asked what was wrong with the FE intervention regime, he accused Ofsted of pointless inspections that come shortly before mergers and "an absolutely unfair experience" which in one case, resulted in three staff "off with some mental health issues on the day of the inspection".

What he described was a pattern of intervention to avoid insolvency, followed by support from government and the FE Commissioner's team to put in place a recovery plan and preparation for merger which was then interrupted by what he perceived to be a damaging Ofsted inspection.

"At Stratford-upon-Avon College our report was

published 56 days before it dissolved. What was the point apart from putting us through the mill?" he asked other senior college leaders at the event.

And, as FE Week discovered when looking for other examples, Ofsted published the Prospects College of Advanced Technology grade three inspection two weeks AFTER being dissolved as part of a merger with South Essex College.

In fact, Ofsted does have a deferral policy that they could have deployed, as I and the National Audit Office discovered when reporting on the demise of the largest private training provider, Learndirect.

Their policy, dated June 2016, states that a deferral may be granted if "the

provision is due to merge, close or move and it is decided that no useful purpose will be served in inspecting it."

Learndirect successfully avoided an inspection on 1 November 2016 by asking for a deferral on the grounds it was working towards an imminent sale.

So on the face of it maybe Cropley has a valid point: what was the point of spending public money sending inspectors to produce a report for an institution that within weeks would not exist?

Why didn't Ofsted use the scarce inspection resource elsewhere, like they did for Learndirect in 2016?

These questions are difficult to answer, without access to all the facts.

Ofsted has a very transparent inspection regime

and framework and FE Week would be the first to criticise them for not making their own judgements about who and when to visit.

And an inspection ahead of a merger may actually be useful for the merger partner to receive an independent assessment of the quality of the provision they are taking on.

But what is not so clear is why they choose to inspect when they do.

This is something that could be quite easily explained in their reports - along with working towards a stronger model of collaboration between Ofsted, the ESFA and FE Commissioner's team.

Nick Linford, Editor
news@feweek.co.uk

Readers' reply



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First 'outstanding' Ofsted rating for FE college under new framework

This is no mean achievement. Well done to everyone involved.

Tony Allen

Small business fury over Hadlow administration

Anyone asked why DfE created this situation and then wasted £2 million on an administration? If they had spoken to creditors, then would it have cost less? Waste of taxpayers' money...

Peter Chaney

Only localism can unlock the skills sector's true potential

Great article in @FEWeek by Anna Round, @IPPRNorth. A localised approach has the potential to transform employer engagement, effectively positioning businesses as stakeholders

in their local economies alongside learners and local government.

The Edge Foundation

My only problem with "localism" is it risks becoming parochialism. Learners are mobile and shouldn't be tied to only developing a certain set of skills.

Steve Hewitt

Lib Dems pledge £10k 'skills wallet' for adults

I want to know, will those that have already passed the 25-year-old threshold be able to receive the initial £4,000 and then the two £3,000 payment contributions if this proposal actually happens?

Labour will create 320,000 green apprenticeships, Corbyn to tell CBI conference

Governments never create

apprenticeships unless it is an apprenticeship in boondoggling... the private sector creates real apprenticeships for real professions that create real output.

Nelly Ericsson

Why colleges are choosing GCSE re-sits over alternatives

I don't want to be cynical but the fact that a grade 1 GCSE counts as a pass while functional skills is pass/fail might have something to do with it

Sally Mitchell

It has nothing to do with limiting progress and everything to do with progression data. If a learner goes from grade 1 to 2 it shows progression with no thought to what it is doing to the learner who will have to re-sit yet again.

Kerry Harris

REPLY OF THE WEEK

First 'outstanding' Ofsted rating for FE college under new framework



Fantastic news for the sector! Well done Karen Dobson and all the governors and staff @NSCGNewcastle and @NSCGStafford

Richard Atkins

Experts

VIKKI LIOGIER

Head of Learning Technologies,
Education and Training Foundation



Edtech reforms that ignore FE's 'dual professionalism' will make things worse

Edtech can improve teaching, learning and assessment – and save time (but only if it's done right), says Vikki Liogier

It is cliché by now, but the world of work really is changing and no industry sector will avoid technology's transformative impact, not least education. As pointed out by Nora Senior in these pages last week, this has implications for the professional practice of teachers and trainers, from the curriculum they deliver to the professional development they experience.

I agree with Ms Senior that professional development must include improving the digital skills of the workforce in line with changes in the workplace. However, efforts are likely to be counterproductive if they focus on this and don't account for helping practitioners to excel in their distinctive "dual professionalism" – their necessary expertise in teaching and in the industry sector their curriculum prepares young people for.

Being an effective, productive practitioner in any sector means developing sustainable practices, avoiding overload and stress – a tall order in FE at present. Unless we get the implementation of educational technology right, we could compound problems with workload, recruitment and retention.

“The digital revolution is affecting pedagogy and curriculum”

Using educational technology or “edtech” to develop teaching practice is a well-rehearsed theme, and one that has come back into focus with Ofsted's new education inspection framework. With a fresh emphasis on “quality of education”, the framework will review how teachers and trainers are implementing proven and well-regarded teaching and learning practices. Edtech offers an array of tools to support practical approaches to implementing established pedagogy.

Using these very tools, the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) has created an online training service – the Enhance Digital Teaching platform – based on bite-size modules to provide

practitioners with easy-to-access ways of developing their professionalism in this area. The training service supports our digital teaching professional framework.

The ETF is also consulting on a possible “edtech teacher status” award to recognise and reward professional development in digital skills. This would recognise advanced practitioners and would enable teachers and trainers to demonstrate how they are having an impact by supporting other practitioners to develop their pedagogy using edtech.

So much for developing how teachers teach, but developing practitioners' industry-related digital skills is also under scrutiny. The government's new essential digital skills entitlement for adults aged 19-plus comes into force from summer next year; the ETF has been commissioned by the DfE to develop and provide a continuous professional learning and development (CPLD) package to prepare practitioners in FE and training to deliver the new qualifications.

Aside from these generic skills, each industry sector also has its own hardware and software that are constantly upgraded, and its own evolving practices. It is important our teachers and trainers are kept abreast of all these developments, which ought to define what they teach.

Mirroring our dual professionalism, the digital revolution we are experiencing is affecting pedagogy and curriculum.

We need sustainable practice to give practitioners the means to save time and cut workload, and it is welcome that this is one of the DfE's priorities as highlighted in its strategy document *Realising the potential of technology in education* published in April this year.

Use of edtech and enhancing digital skills can be key to productivity in education just like every other sector. Esam Baboukhan's session at last week's Society for Education and Training conference showed that edtech can improve teaching, learning and assessment while saving time. Done right, it can provide fresh opportunities to inspire and sustain the professionals who are the foundation of our sector's success

However, the dual professionalism of FE demands a careful approach to implementation. With intensified pressure on every aspect of teachers' and trainers' work, sustainability needs to inform all our actions or things could get a lot worse before they get better.

PROFESSOR EWART KEEP

Director of SKOPE,
Oxford University



My five priorities for FE that should go first in the next education secretary's in-tray

Some issues have been hanging over the vocational sector for 40 years, says Ewart Keep. If we truly want to transform our society and economy, we can't afford to keep passing the buck

As FE and skills have taken centre stage in this election battle, and parties vie for our attention with policies and promises, it is worth reflecting on some of the deep-seated and intractable issues facing the next education secretary.

First, the apprenticeship policy is suffering from a lethal combination of providers anxious to game the system creatively, and employers keen to get their levy back without doing anything new by way of training. The result has been an explosion of higher-level training for established adult employees. There is nothing wrong with this – indeed more is needed – but provision for young people has fallen, the opposite of what policymakers had hoped for.

At some point in 2020 the apprenticeship levy pot will run out, with nothing left over for smaller firms. The government can either try to reduce/cap costs, or restrict the age, wage or level of training of apprentices, but either “solution” will be met by howls of rage. Fortunately for the new secretary, the decision will probably have to be made by the Treasury as the levy is a UK-wide tax.

Next, T-levels. The government is already touting them as a new gold standard qualification, with optimistic projections about how employers will react to them when recruiting – before a single student has completed one. But the bulk of 16 to 19 students in FE are on courses at level 2 or below, the concept of a “transition year” is still nothing more than a concept, and there are serious questions about where work placements will come from and whether they can function as intended. And that's not to mention the sheer economics of provision.

The nation also has to come to terms with the gradual retreat of employers from training employees. Best estimates are that between 1997 and 2017 the volume of training given by companies to their workers in the UK fell by 60 per cent, and there is no sign of a halt to this decline. It is not a temporary phenomenon, but appears to be a structural trend deeply rooted in employment and competitive strategies.

The importance of this issue cannot be over-estimated. It partly underlies the Labour Party's lifelong learning proposals and the Lib Dems' “skills wallet”. We haven't even chosen whether to embrace this trend or try to reverse it; either will be incredibly challenging.

“At some point in 2020 the apprenticeship levy pot will run out”

Fourth, governance. Civil servants still refer to an education system, but in fact what policy has created over the past 20 years is a set of quasi-markets, funded through atomised, individual student choice and superintended by a host of regulators (commissioners, ESFA, Ofsted, OfS, etc). Fragmentation has brought multiple problems, of which Hadlow and Highbury are simply the most egregious examples. Local accountability is often weak or non-existent. Because funding follows individual choice, neither employers nor government have many levers to influence the shape of provision and, where it applies, devolution is patchy, weak and stalled. It is unclear what solutions are available.

Finally, there is the question of a vision for vocational education. To date the Conservatives have eschewed formulating one, but the other parties have started sketching theirs. Whether it's a strategy or just a set of objectives, though, the capacity of government to deliver any of it is open to serious doubt. Powerful, capable, intermediary bodies have been abolished and their expertise dissipated. Collective employer organisation to address skills issues is now very limited – probably more so than in any other developed country. At national, local and sectoral levels, capacity to craft and deliver policy and interventions around skills and competitiveness is extremely weak.

The upshot is that, unless the new incumbent starts with structural reform, we may find ourselves with a secretary of state with great policies, but no means to really implement them. Again.

What would you tell the leaders of the major political parties about needed policy changes in further education? Tony Lewin has a few ideas...

Everyone who works in FE knows how vital the sector is. Colleges provide life-changing opportunities while powering the workforce of local industry. They educate and train 2.2 million learners, making an undeniable impact on individuals, employers and communities.

It is therefore heartening to see that discussion around the work of FE is becoming increasingly part of the mainstream political conversation. Last week, the three major political parties recognised the pivotal role that colleges play.

But many challenges remain. It will be important that the next government listens to colleges and tries to grapple with some long-standing issues.

One is the underfunding of provision for 16 to 19-year-olds. It is welcome the base rate for 16 to 19-year-olds has been raised to £4,188. However, this falls short of the recommendations of the "Raise the rate campaign" and the education select committee, who both called for an increase up to £4,760.

The crucial element is to ensure that the core element of vocational provision is appropriately funded. A total of 540 guided learning hours may be allocated to a programme, but when you break it down only about 360 hours are spent directly delivering the core component. A funding increase is undoubtedly essential, but it will be crucial that funding then flows to the element of programmes that are most directly related to the acquisition of technical skills.

Adult education and participation are also

TONY LEWIN

Principal,
Newcastle College



Politicians are beginning to realise that they can't afford to ignore FE

significant challenges. There are several reasons why people may not engage with adult education, but the cost should not be one of them. One significant barrier is that those already in receipt of a level 3 qualification cannot be funded to undertake another. Yet in places such as Newcastle there are opportunities to retrain to get the skills that local employers need — but people are reluctant to take on more personal debt. The government should allow them to undertake a second, fully funded qualification at level 3. The regional combined authorities give us a mechanism to pilot such an approach.

Apprenticeship and the levy continue to pose challenges for colleges. The principle and idea

of the levy is still widely supported, but it is not working well. Large employers are underspending their levy, but there is still apparently not enough money to fund non-levy apprenticeships. The impact of the changes on smaller employers, who struggle with the 20 per cent off-the-job training rule, has been severe, and there has been a consistent decline in the number of apprenticeships starts since the policy has been introduced.

This is not to say that the current system should be scrapped, but the government should focus on ensuring that levy underspends can be reallocated on a demand-driven basis, that there is transparency in the price banding and standard

approval process, and that longstanding issues with the endpoint assessment process are addressed. The levy can still be remedied, but with some minor adjustments.

"Cost should not stop participation in adult education"

Finally, there are recurring issues around English and maths. We know how demoralised many young people are at having to resit their English and maths GCSE, especially when they may be unlikely to achieve a grade 4 in the time available. We should look for alternatives that ensure learners are making progress and achieve a qualification that recognises their progress. The levels of English and maths skills vary in different occupations and we should have the flexibility to deliver qualifications that best reflect the needs of the individual.

So, despite these challenges, it does seem that FE is being taken increasingly seriously. Historically the government hasn't shown a great interest in what FE does, but that might be changing. Politicians have realised that they can't afford to ignore it. Let's hope that this sentiment lasts up to the election and beyond.

This piece is part of a series of Collab Group election 2019 opinion pieces



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Jo Maher

Principal,
Loughborough College

Start date Spring 2020

Previous job

Principal, Boston College

Interesting fact

She had to go to ballet lessons as a child, until it was obvious that she couldn't dance, and then she was allowed to do Taekwando instead



Paul Cox

Chief executive and
principal designate,
Eastleigh College

Start date November 2019

Previous job

Vice principal for curriculum and quality, Eastleigh College

Interesting fact

He and his wife, Clare, have trekked to both Everest Base Camp and Machu Picchu



Tamarra Taylor

Executive director of learner
services, Grimsby Institute

Start date September 2019

Previous job

Head of learner services, Grimsby Institute

Interesting fact

A huge Inspector Morse fan, she once met actor Shaun Evans from the prequel series Endeavour at the Bodleian Library in Oxford

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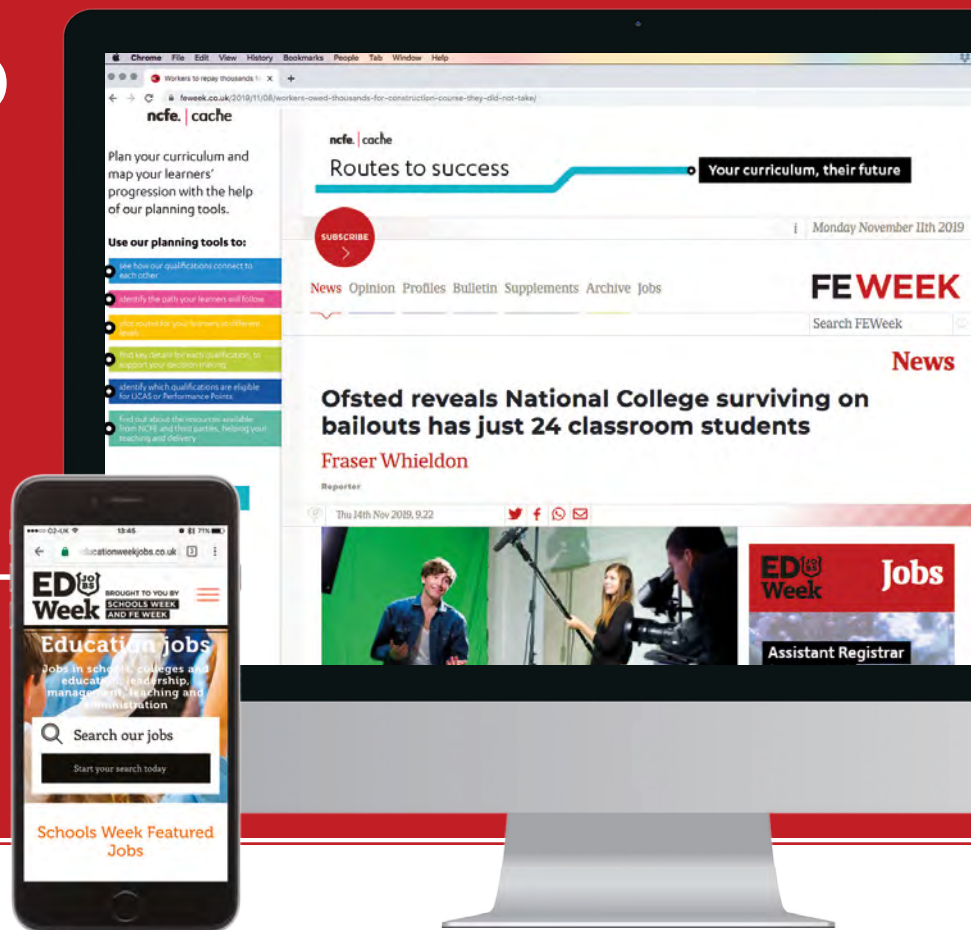
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FE Week Sudoku challenge

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

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

Solutions: See right

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Last Edition's winner: Paula Flaherty

Solutions

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

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