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FEWEEK

SECTOR 'TICKING TIME BOMB' WITHOUT MORE CASH

Cornwall boss to shut campus and warns other colleges could follow

BILLY CAMDEN BILLY @FEWEEK.CO.UK See page 10



HIGHEST PRINCIPALS' PAY PLUMMETS

TOP 10 SALARIES IN 2018 FELL AN
AVERAGE OF MORE THAN £50K AFTER
SIX COLLEGE LEADERS REPLACED

FULL ANALYSIS AND REACTION ON PAGE 14



BILLY CAMDEN BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

SHREWSBURY COLLEGE IN GRADE 4 BATTLE

- › Student safety in county lines hotspot disputed as formal complaint stalls report
- › Principal says Ofsted ran out of time to check evidence and 'judgement is wrong'
- › Police called to incident during inspection - but college claims campuses safe

Exclusive YASEMIN CRAGGS MERSINOGLU YASEMIN@FEWEEK.CO.UK

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Chief Executive, WorldSkills UK

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College backs out of T-levels to prioritise campus upgrade

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A financially troubled college subject to FE Commissioner intervention has decided to withdraw from delivering T-levels, the Department for Education has revealed.

Richmond-upon-Thames College had been selected to deliver all the routes being rolled out as part of the second wave of T-levels in September 2021: digital, construction, education and childcare, and health and science.

Yet on Wednesday it was announced the college had decided to pull out of the new qualifications to "prioritise the development" of its campus.

This £80 million programme includes a dedicated sixth-form centre, a theatre, 3D prototyping laboratory and training restaurant.

A spokesperson said the college is

"strongly committed to T-levels" and it will look at introducing the new post-16 technical qualifications "at a later stage rather than in 2021".

The announcement came on the same day that the Education and Skills Funding Agency published a notice to improve for Richmond, owing to "declining financial health" and a forecast of a "significant" financial deficit for 2018-19.

It also said there were "weaknesses in leadership and management".

As previously revealed by FE Week, Richmond's former principal Robin Ghurbhurun left in July for "personal reasons", around the same time of a visit from the FE Commissioner amid financial concerns. He has since been replaced by Diane Dimond, a chartered accountant, in the interim.

East Sussex College Group also received a notice to improve this week, but the DfE confirmed it will remain

as one of the September 2020 T-level providers.

Richmond-upon-Thames isn't the first provider to have stepped back from T-level delivery.

In October, education secretary Gavin Williamson's old college, Scarborough Sixth Form, pulled out of offering construction and digital pathways from 2020 because of a lack of opportunities for the T-levels' mandatory 315-hour work placements locally, and a shortage of good-quality teachers.

Two schools previously ditched plans to take part in the 2020 wave.

A DfE spokesperson said they had always anticipated there would be "a certain amount of fluctuation" in the list of T-level providers, but they have "an excellent group of high-quality providers ready to offer the first three T-levels from this September and from 2021 onwards".

The department took a phased

T-LEVELS
THE NEXT LEVEL QUALIFICATION

approach to the introduction of the flagship qualifications "so they can grow in a managed way", the spokesperson added.

"This approach means that young people, parents and employers can be confident that the courses on offer will be high-quality, will provide the skills students need to progress, and will provide industry with the workforce it needs for the future."

T-levels in digital, construction and education and childcare sectors are due to be delivered from this September as part of a three-stage approach.

Seven further T-levels in finance,

maintenance, installation and repair, design and development, management and administration and human resources will be taught from 2022.

And applications were opened last week for providers to take on wave three of T-levels, to be delivered from 2023, which will include courses in agriculture, environment and animal care, catering and hospitality, creative and media, and hair and beauty.

More than 100 providers have been lined up to teach the two-year courses, which will be equivalent to three A-levels and combine classroom learning with the industry placement.

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PhD-level apprenticeship plans move a step closer

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Exclusive

Plans for PhD-level apprenticeships have moved a step closer, despite the government's failing to agree a policy position on the controversial concept.

A proposal for the first ever level 8 apprenticeship – the clinical academic professional – has been approved for development.

It is not known how long the standard, for the health and science sector, will take to develop before its final programme can be put to the government and be signed off for approval and delivery. The chair of the trailblazer group declined to comment.

FE Week revealed in April 2019 that plans for PhD-level apprenticeships had been thrown into doubt after the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) raised

concerns they were not in the “spirit” of the programme.

And it appears the quango still has apprehensions about them.

Officials on the IfATE's approval and funding committee discussed the level 8 clinical academic professional programme in September, the same month the standard was signed off for development.

Minutes from that meeting stated: “The committee expressed concerns about whether this occupation meets the criteria for an apprenticeship, in particular the inclusion of a PhD.

“In addition, the committee believed that it did not meet the criteria for an apprenticeship standard.

“The committee noted that further discussions were ongoing on this issue in conjunction with the Department for Education.”

A spokesperson for the IfATE would not comment on the progress of the standard's development this week.

He would only say that: “The

proposal for a level 8 clinical academic professional standard has been approved for development following consultation with the Department for Education. This is the first stage towards full approval of the apprenticeship for use by employers and apprentices.

“Work will continue with trailblazer employers to ensure that it meets government policy and quality criteria.”

Minutes from an IfATE board meeting in January 2019 revealed a discussion concluding with an action for “the DfE to explore the concept of level 8 apprenticeships further and agree a policy position”.

FE Week asked the department this week if they had now agreed a way forward. A spokesperson told us: “We are continuing to keep the programme under review, and we are looking carefully at what the priorities of the programme should be from 2020 onwards.”

The spokesperson would not say whether a policy position had now been



agreed, despite it being more than a year since the issue was raised.

A proposal for a technical specialist in nuclear engineering, science or technology PhD-level apprenticeship has also been in development since 2018.

Last year the employers involved said they were expecting a speedy resolution, but the trailblazer group is still waiting for a decision on the proposal by the IfATE.

A spokesperson for the Nuclear Skills Strategy Group told FE Week: “The trailblazer group of nuclear sector employers is continuing to develop the level 8 nuclear technical specialist standard, and following the IfATE's

processes for applications.

“The group received confirmation from IfATE in August that they would receive submissions for level 8 standards. The occupational proposal for the standard was originally submitted in September, and the IfATE panel requested some amendments, following which the group resubmitted a revised version in December.

“We await the decision on the revised proposal, but in the meantime we have continued to work on the content of the standard itself and the assessment plan, in preparation for submission according to the IfATE deadlines.”

‘Inadequate’ Mercia to close by August

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Exclusive

The first FE provider to receive a grade four under Ofsted's new inspection regime is closing down.

Sixteen jobs are set to be lost and hundreds of learners will be affected after an appeal by independent learning provider Mercia Partnership (UK) Ltd failed to overturn an ‘inadequate’ rating, first published in October.

The provider, which was set up in 1995, currently operates from two centres – one in Chorley, Lancashire, and one in Newhaven, East Sussex – delivering a range of apprenticeships and adult learning programmes.

The Department for Education issued Mercia Partnership with an early termination warning notice following the grade four. A spokesperson for the provider said they will officially close the business by August.

Mercia Partnership offered praise to the education watchdog's new

inspection framework, describing its methods as “right and appropriate” and “100 times better” than the previous one.

However, they said the way Ofsted went about its inspection was “poor” and the sample of learners did not give the “full picture”.

The spokesperson said the appeal was “a waste of time”, accused an inspector of causing a safeguarding issue during the visit, and claimed it was “unfair” to be judged on some learners that it took on from collapsed providers.

They alleged that the education watchdog apologised for an incident in which an inspector phoned an adult learner with severe anxiety, despite acknowledging they needed prior warning before being contacted. The learner reportedly never returned to complete their course after the call.

The spokesperson also said Mercia had taken on learners from two collapsed providers. This had been a “very bitter pill to swallow”, and had “worked against” the firm.

Some of the learners “were in limbo for six months” and had been taken



on “at the request of the ESFA”, the provider claimed, adding that “all the negative comments in the report were purely based on these learners they spoke to that had come from another provider”.

“It was very unfair to be judged on learners having gaps in learning when it wasn't [Mercia Partnership's] fault,” the spokesperson said.

“We've basically been shut down on the back of the helping learners.”

They warned that “ethics will go out the window” for training firms when making business decisions about taking on learners from failed providers – adding that the judgement “is going to be detrimental to learners moving

forward”.

The spokesperson also criticised the education watchdog's lack of transparency on evidence collected after asking to access negative feedback received from past learners – who allegedly told Mercia Partnership they had praised it.

Ofsted's report stated that learners and apprentices “do not experience a well-planned programme of study” and concluded the curriculum was “not fit for purpose” and “does not prepare them sufficiently for their future careers”.

It claimed apprentices “receive a poor standard of training” and are “unhappy, unmotivated, and, in some

cases, very angry about the quality of their training”.

Ofsted reported that high staff turnover had “a negative impact” on apprentices' learning with frequent changes in assessors leaving “significant gaps” in the training programme.

The education watchdog told FE Week it stands by the findings that are set out in the report, but declined to comment directly on the allegations.

An Ofsted spokesperson added: “When they visit further education colleges and skills providers our inspectors always take into account the starting points of learners and how they are progressing – regardless of where they came from.”

The inspection of Mercia Partnership took place between September 17 and 20 last year.

Prior to this, the independent learning provider had been graded ‘good’ in the most recent full inspection in 2015, ‘requires improvement’ in 2014 and ‘satisfactory’ in both 2012 and 2008.

It had direct contracts with the Education and Skills Funding Agency totalling £1.9 million in 2018/19.

'Transparency and trust' pave way for KCC merger with Morley College

BILLY CAMDEN

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An embattled London college has announced it will officially merge next month, after the FE Commissioner found a new culture of "openness, transparency and trust".

Kensington and Chelsea College (KCC) will join with Morley College on February 3.

The resolution follows a governing body meeting last night, and the outcome of Richard Atkins' final monitoring visit at KCC, which took place on October 30, 2019.

KCC has been subject to close oversight since late 2017 – in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire – after serious concerns were raised by the local community regarding a proposed merger with Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College. The merger was later blocked by the FE Commissioner.

Campaigners were particularly concerned about the loss of KCC's Wornington Road site, which was



controversially sold for £25.3 million to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in 2016.

The college has since undergone changes in leadership. It secured £32.3 million from the government to help buy back the campus that serves the Grenfell community, and to move ahead with a merger with Morley College.

The FE Commissioner's latest report on KCC states that there has been a "notable and tangible improvement to the atmosphere and culture across the college". It adds that the college's

operations are "well-led, giving a sense of calm in the build-up to merger".

Staff, whilst "understandably anxious" about the merger, talked of a "culture of openness, transparency, accessibility and trust in relation to the board and the senior leadership team".

They also commented that having an agreed future for the college, together with a commitment to financial support, was proving "instrumental in providing staff and students with a sense of optimism about the future."

"Planning for the merger is progressing well despite significant

complexities and challenges that have mainly been overcome."

Whilst recognising that the college is making "good progress", Atkins' team noted there is "still much to do".

KCC is "financially inadequate" after recording a deficit of just under £6 million in 2018/19. It is expecting to reduce this to a £2.8 million deficit by the end of 2019/20. The college has no borrowings and still has cash in the bank, the FE Commissioner said.

His team added that governors and senior managers have taken action to significantly reduce its cost base this year.

While this still leaves a large deficit, it "does slow down the erosion of cash through operations and does not include any actions that are contrary to the Morley College London merger proposal".

KCC received its fifth consecutive grade three report from Ofsted last year.

Ian Valvona, who joined as chair of KCC in 2018, said the merger decision was a "landmark in the continuing

upturn in fortunes for the college and the communities it serves in the aftermath of the Grenfell tragedy".

Andy Cole, the college's principal who also joined in 2018, added: "I am immensely proud of my staff who have remained committed to improving the opportunities and outcomes of our learners in the face of the most challenging of circumstances, and it is heartening to see this reflected in the FE Commissioner's report."

"Throughout the past two years I have been humbled by the passion and determination of campaigners who have fought so hard to preserve the best of the college's rich history for the benefit of future generations. I wish to place on record my respect for their work both before and subsequent to the tragic events of the June 14, 2017."

A spokesperson for Morley College said their governing body is now preparing "for its meeting on January 20, when we give final consideration to the resolution to merge".

A spokesperson for the Save Wornington Campaign group said they will do "everything in our power to ensure that this college stays open for our community".

"Morley College are showing genuine commitment to the project and we welcome that," she added. "We will hold them to account and ensure that they are honouring North Kensington and the Grenfell legacy."

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News

Four more colleges placed into DfE financial intervention

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Exclusive

Fifteen per cent of colleges are currently in financial intervention, *FE Week* analysis has found.

Following the publication of four new financial notices of concern on Wednesday, 26 of the 170 general FE colleges in England, as defined by Ofsted, are in active financial intervention.

The four notices published yesterday were for: Kensington and Chelsea College, Richmond upon Thames College, East Sussex College Group and Gateshead College.

Richmond upon Thames' was issued following an FE Commissioner diagnostic assessment in August 2019 which recommended that "the college is put into formal intervention and that a

member of ESFA staff should attend all future board meetings".

In particular, the report highlighted the declining financial health of the college and a forecast of significant financial deficit for 18/19, inadequate financial management, control and reporting, as well as "weaknesses in leadership and management".

Wednesday's notice added that the FE Commissioner and the ESFA acknowledge the "chair and the governing body's swift actions to address the situation".

As previously revealed by *FE Week*, Richmond's former principal Robin Ghurbhurun left in July for "personal reasons", around the same time of a visit from the FE Commissioner amid financial concerns. He has since been replaced by Diane Dimond, a chartered accountant, in the interim.

Gateshead College, rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted, received its financial notice to improve after it launched an



investigation into a shock £6 million deficit.

Judith Doyle, who was the highest paid principal in England in 2017/18, has

since retired with immediate effect.

Gateshead's notice of concern said it is being issued because the college "has been assessed as experiencing serious cash flow pressures". The college is now in formal intervention.

East Sussex College Group's notice

"The college has been assessed as experiencing serious cash flow pressures"

to improve only stated that it has been assessed as having "inadequate financial health by the ESFA", and it is now in formal intervention.

Kensington & Chelsea College's notice follows an FE Commissioner visit in

October 2019, the outcome of which signed off on merger plans with Morley College.

Wednesday's report said the ESFA is now placing KCC in "supervised college status", due to the "well understood exceptional position and circumstances of the college". Its deficit for 2018/19 hit just under £6 million.

Where a notice to improve is issued, the ESFA states that it may "take it into account when determining any eligibility for growth funding and it may also affect your ability to be successful in tendering for other funds and other competitive tendering processes for new provision".

Colleges in financial intervention must attend regular meetings with ESFA, which will "focus on the college's progression against the milestones in the plan, where the college will be expected to provide information to demonstrate proper oversight and timely implementation of the plan".

COLLEGE (NAME AT TIME NOTICE ISSUED)	DATE NOTICE ISSUED
Birmingham Metropolitan College	17/07/2015
Bradford College	22/02/2018
Southampton City College	07/12/2016
City of Liverpool College	23/02/2016
City of Wolverhampton College	07/06/2012
Cornwall College	27/04/2016
Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College	03/10/2018
East Coast College	05/12/2014
East Sussex College Group	15/11/2019
Gateshead College	20/12/2019
Hadlow College	12/03/2019
Hartlepool College	03/04/2019
Hull College	11/11/2016
Kensington and Chelsea College	16/10/2019
Kirklees College	07/11/2017
Macclesfield College	14/01/2019
North Hertfordshire College	03/10/2018
North Warwickshire & South Leicestershire College	18/09/2018
Richmond-upon-Thames College	22/11/2019
St Helen's College	13/05/2019
Stoke on Trent College	20/10/2014
Telford College	25/11/2015
Warrington and Royal Vale College	17/06/2019
West Kent and Ashford College	12/03/2019
West Nottinghamshire College	24/07/2018
Weymouth College	23/08/2013



FE Commissioner Richard Atkins

Gender pay gap doubles for apprentices

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The apprenticeships system is “continuing to let women down”, a union has said. The claim came after it was revealed the gender pay gap for apprentices has almost doubled in recent years.

Male apprentices at levels 2 and 3 were paid nearly six per cent more than their female counterparts – £7.90 per hour compared to £7.47 – on average in 2018.

The gap was just 3.6 per cent in 2016 – £7.10 per hour compared to £6.85.

The figures were revealed in the biennial Apprenticeship Pay Survey, published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy last week.

Research by the likes of the Trades Union Congress has linked the gender pay gap to differences in the sectors in which men and women take up apprenticeships. These choices are often based on occupational stereotypes of “traditional roles” – and the pay disparity between them.

The 2018 Apprenticeship Pay Survey, for example, shows the female-dominated level 2 and 3 programme of hairdressing had the lowest mean

weekly wage of £163. Electro technical apprentices on the other hand, the majority of whom are male, got paid £337 – the second highest total weekly earnings from basic pay.

Sophie Walker, chief executive of the Young Women's Trust, said the survey “once again highlights the sexism and discrimination that young women face even at the very beginning of their careers”.

She added: “This discrimination not only shuts them out of apprenticeships such as engineering and construction that have the best opportunities for pay and progression but fails to provide high quality opportunities in childcare and social care in which the majority of young women apprentices work”.

The survey also showed that women were less likely to be taught their skills properly – while 57 per cent of men received formal training, only 40 per cent of women did. Female apprentices were also less likely to receive a wage that complied with the national minimum wage – 22 per cent, compared with 18 per cent of men.

Walker said more investment must be made in social infrastructure “so that working in these sectors is valued and offers the same level of pay and security as other apprenticeships”.

Amy Dowling, from the National



Society of Apprentices, told FE Week the union shares the frustrations “that women continue to be let down by our apprenticeship system”. She added that the government need “to make sure women's work is fairly funded”.

She said: “We knew it [the gender gap] was coming, but so did the government. When the government first looked at the funding arrangements for each apprenticeship, they recognised that women would lose out. Last year the Department for Education was warned that its efforts to widen participation were ‘inadequate’ and that there were no gender based targets at all.”

Mark Dawe, chief executive of the Association of Employment and

Learning Providers, pointed out that while the mean hourly rate gap between male and female apprentices is large, the “median figures are actually very close” at £7.10 and £7.06 respectively.

He agreed the gender difference could “perhaps be explained by some of the higher paid standards being male dominated, rather than differences between genders within a standard”.

Dawe said the way to address this “is to make further progress on how we inform pupils, parents and teachers about apprenticeship choices in terms of tackling gender stereotyping”.

Solutions offered to reduce the gender pay gap include combating unconscious bias, directing women to

better-paid industries and reducing sexism and discrimination in the workplace.

A Department for Education spokesperson said: “This gender pay gap is partly the result of women being over-represented in lower paying sectors and under-represented in higher paying sectors, such as science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM).

“We are working hard to encourage women into STEM sector apprenticeships through our Fire it Up Campaign and our Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network.”

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education announced it would trial the use of “gender-neutral” language in May 2019, after research found “masculine” words in job adverts, such as ‘ambition’, ‘challenging’ and ‘leader’, deter women from applying for science, technology, engineering and mathematics apprenticeships.

An IfATE spokesperson told FE Week: “The Institute continues to develop a long-term programme to ensure that gender-neutral language is embedded in all areas.

“The use of language across all new digital standards is now reviewed as part of the Institute's approvals process. This will be rolled out across all standards looking ahead.”

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Skills advisory panels set to influence

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Exclusive

Skills advisory panels (SAPs) could be given a role in influencing which courses will be prioritised and funded in their area.

Little is known about the 36 SAPs, but FE Week understands that the government is working on secondary legislation, an FE Bill, which would change that.

The panels were heralded in the Conservatives' 2017 manifesto as a means of "dealing with local skills shortages and to ensure that colleges deliver the skills required by local businesses". They have so far been given £2.7 million, £75,000 each, to undertake labour market analysis.

Typically SAPs have been established within mayoral combined authorities (MCAs) or local enterprise partnerships (LEPs).

The FE Bill could mean colleges and providers lose ultimate power over deciding which courses are run, with SAPs providing critical advice to national and local government over the sectors prioritised in their region.

SAPs could, for example, advise that the government prioritise funding for classroom and apprenticeship engineering courses at the expense of courses in media and the arts.

And should such a move take place, it would be welcomed by the representative body the LEP Network, which said that, based on the data that has been produced by SAPs, connecting them to apprenticeships is "smart thinking and a natural development of exploiting LMI to help focus on areas of employer need – and that can only be a benefit to local communities".

The Department for Education has insisted that while SAPs have a "vital role in helping raise the profile of apprenticeships with local employers and providers" and an unofficial role in informing provision locally, "there are no plans to involve SAPs in the apprenticeship standards process in the future".

SAPs were the brainchild of Theresa May's government and featured in its 2017 industrial strategy, which told of how SAPs would produce "rigorous" analysis of the current and future supply and demand for skills, and help areas "form a clearer understanding of their skills requirements".

This could then be used by colleges, universities and other providers to



help fill employers' skills needs. The analysis is also intended to help direct investment in preparation for local providers to roll out T-levels, and by careers advisory facilities such as the National Careers Service and the Careers Enterprise Company to inform their local activities.

Industrial strategy: "SAPs will have real, meaningful influence over the provision of education and training for those over the age of 16"

The strategy envisaged SAPs would have "real, meaningful" influence over the provision of education and training for those over the age of 16, and they would work with MCAs and LEPs to establish the best way of ensuring that influence is effective.

Intended to be made up of between 15 and 20 members from providers,

employers and local authorities, the SAPs were structured around 15 technical routes identified in the government's 2016 Skills Plan, which includes such areas as construction, digital and social care.

Mayoral combined authorities have broadly tacked to the government's recommended approach to SAPs: a group featuring leading local politicians and representatives from business and education running LMI and analysis to inform careers education and skills strategies.

The Department for Education announced in 2018 that each of the 36 SAPs would receive £75,000 to help them analyse their current and future skill needs – £2.7 million was given out overall.

The money, which was handed out in April 2019, had to be spent by March this year and was to be used to hire additional analysts, train up existing analysts and undertake more analysis to establish employers' needs. Most MCAs that FE Week spoke to had used the money for these purposes.

Yet there has been criticism of SAPs' role and their output: the data supposed to power their deliberations would be "weak" or even non-existent, Professor Ewart Keep from the Centre for Skills, Knowledge and

The government's 2017 *Industrial Strategy* which fleshed out the role of skills advisory panels

Organisational Performance wrote for FE Week that same year.

This is evidenced by colleges' "sporadic" use of LMI, as reported by labour market analysts Emsi. Their director of further education John Gray said some providers regard the data as merely a "tick-box exercise" to please Ofsted.

SAPs were also given no financial levers to affect change in provision

locally, Keep said, leaving their ability to make fundamental changes in provision "probably close to nil".

And although SAPs were given pride of place during May's leadership of the Conservative government, little to no mention was made of SAPs in the party's 2019 manifesto and little else has been said about them while Boris Johnson has been prime minister, until now.

ce which FE courses receive funding

LEP AREAS COVERED

- 1 Black Country
- 2 Buckinghamshire Thames Valley
- 3 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- 4 Cheshire & Warrington
- 5 Coast to Capital
- 6 Cornwall and Isles of Scilly
- 7 Coventry and Warwickshire
- 8 Cumbria
- 9 Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire
- 10 Dorset
- 11 Gloucestershire - Gfirst
- 12 Greater Birmingham & Solihull
- 13 Greater Lincolnshire
- 14 Greater Manchester
- 15 Enterprise M3
- 16 Heart of the South West
- 17 Hertfordshire
- 18 Humber
- 19 Lancashire
- 20 Leeds City Region
- 21 Leicester and Leicestershire
- 22 Liverpool City Region
- 23 London
- 24 New Anglia
- 25 North East
- 26 Oxfordshire
- 27 Sheffield City Region
- 28 Solent
- 29 South East
- 30 South East Midlands
- 31 Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire
- 32 Swindon and Wiltshire
- 33 Tees Valley
- 34 Thames Valley Berkshire
- 35 The Marches
- 36 West of England
- 37 Worcestershire
- 38 York, North Yorkshire and East Riding



TEES VALLEY COMBINED AUTHORITY

This SAP, the Education, Employment and Skills Partnership Board, has a bumper membership of 23 people; featuring representatives from FE colleges, schools, independent providers, local politicians, departments like BEIS, DfE and DWP, the voluntary sector and employer representative organisations, who meet quarterly. This SAP has been developing analysis which has helped shape the investment in programmes such as Routes to Work, careers education, and apprenticeships. In the future, the authority says it will be carrying out further analysis to define current and future skills requirements.

WEST MIDLANDS COMBINED AUTHORITY

The WMCA's SAP, the Skills Board, is a 16-strong body which meets twice a year and is chaired by the authority's portfolio holder for skills. It also includes representatives from LEPs, an Association of Employment and Learning Providers representative, and a trade union representative. It is looking at using the £75,000 to examine a range of learner journeys to identify critical success factors and the courses that lead to good outcomes. The SAP believes this would help improve learner journeys within and between providers.

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

The GLA's SAP is the Skills for Londoners Board, which has 16 members led by the deputy mayor for skills and featuring representatives from the city's boroughs, sector organisations such as the Association of Colleges, and the world of business. The board, which meets quarterly, spent their £75,000 on hiring economists and a data analyst, who has been developing the skills and development sections of the GLA's local industrial strategy, which is due out early this year.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY

Thirteen members make up this SAP, known locally as the Employment and Skills Board, including business representatives, an independent training provider, a higher education representative and two from the FE sector. It is intended they will meet bi-monthly after they held their first meeting in December. They have used the funding to draw on expertise from Cambridgeshire County Council's data analysis team and have already done some analysis of skills supply and demand. They have kept £20,000 of the £75,000 back to access an LMI tool and run a business engagement survey.

Cornwall campus closure – MP demands government probe

BILLY CAMDEN
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The local Conservative MP for Saltash has called for a government investigation into Cornwall College Group after it announced plans to sell-off a campus in her constituency.

Sheryll Murray wrote to education secretary Gavin Williamson this week after being “so disappointed” to hear the site was closing down.

She said it was “particularly disappointing” considering Cornwall College Group received a £30 million bailout from the government last year. This followed some £4.5 million emergency funding in 2016/17 and another £3.5 million in 2017/18.

Murray wants the investigation to take place “both into how the bailout was used and to see if anything can be done to keep this facility available for further education provision”.

She met with Cornwall College Group’s principal, John Evans, last Friday to discuss this “important local issue”.

The Saltash site is 35 years old and joined the group in August 2001, when it merged with St Austell College.

A total of 74 jobs are now at risk

Sheryll Murray



because of the closure. Around 500 students will be affected – although the majority will have completed their courses by the end of this academic year.

The University and College Union is currently involved in redundancy discussions.

Their regional official Nick Varney said: “The closure of the Saltash site is a big blow for the local community and all those affected.

“We are consulting with the college on how to minimise the impact on staff and students; our top priority is to protect jobs and student provision, and we will be strongly opposing any compulsory redundancies as a result of this decision.”

The campus boasts a higher education centre, a construction skills training centre, commercial hair and beauty salons and a “state-of-the-art” training kitchen that only opened permanently in 2018.

Cornwall College Group is currently working with agents to sell the site, although it has not yet been valued.

Evans, who took over as principal in October 2019, told FE Week that the site needs

“significant capital money to make it



Cornwall College's campus in Saltash

fit for purpose” which he doesn’t have access to.

He said just closing the campus down will save the group hundreds of thousands of pounds.

“The closure of the Saltash site is a big blow for the local community”

“As it currently stands the move will stop us losing money on that site,” he

added. “The contribution it was making was almost negligible due to the class sizes.

“It does not make economical or educational sense to run small group sizes at Saltash.”

Evans added that it was an “incredibly sensitive and difficult decision to make” but the “steer from government has been to minimise duplication in the FE sector in order to create financially resilient colleges”.

He explained that the Saltash campus is 19 minutes from City College Plymouth, 23 minutes from Duchy College Stoke Climsland and 50 minutes from Cornwall College St Austell – all of which offer the same programmes.

Evans said the decision has been forced on the college due to “reduced funding for post-16 learners in colleges” (read the full interview below).

Cornwall College Group has 11 different campuses in total. A spokesperson confirmed that “all other sites will remain open”.

The college is working with affected learners, who will be offered “progression opportunities” at the other nearby colleges.

A bus service will be provided free of charge for the students who are continuing an existing course and have to travel.

The college will also offer staff “redeployment and retraining where possible”.

‘More campuses will close without government investment’ says college chief

Further education is a “ticking time bomb” and more colleges will have to close campuses unless government gets serious about investment in the sector, the boss of Cornwall College has said.

John Evans made the comments in an interview with FE Week after news broke this week that his group was to sell-off its 35-year-old campus in Saltash in order to balance the books.

He said he “regrets” it, but “difficult decisions” need to be made because funding for post-16 learners in colleges has shrunk by 30 per cent over the last ten years.

Evans pointed to the recent increase in funding for learners aged 16 to 18 – rising 4.7 per cent from £4,000 to £4,188 in 2020/21 – and stated that it does not go far enough in covering even inflationary costs; rather, it brings funding

up to 2010 rates.

“When you think about universities getting £9,250 [per student] and schools getting £5,000 to £5,500, something has got to give,” he told FE Week.

“All we hear on the news is how schools are underfunded. I would swap their funding for ours tomorrow given the opportunity and yet we are expected to deliver the electricians, engineers, plumbers, farmers, etc., of the future.

“Vocational curriculum delivery is very expensive to run, compounded with health and safety limitations on group sizes in many cases.”

Evans said there is no natural route for a college to apply for capital money and therefore, many college estates are “fighting to stay fit for purpose”.

“I have seen many fantastic lessons across the country – with a bucket in the corner

catching the water leaking through the roof.”

He continued: “If the government is serious about its industrial strategy, which is underpinned by skills development, then significant investment is urgently required.

“The latest response we keep hearing is that £400 million is being invested in the sector. The impact this has had on the base rate is only £188 per learner. This has made very little difference to the bottom line, with many staff in the sector not receiving a cost of living rise for many years.

“The difficult decision to close the Saltash campus is a direct result of the sector being starved of adequate funding for so long. The FE sector is a ticking time-bomb. It needs addressing urgently.”

Asked if he felt other colleges across the country would have to sell-off campuses unless

funding improves, Evans said: “Yes, without a doubt.”

Last summer, Birmingham Metropolitan College (BMet) controversially closed down its campus in Stourbridge in order to pay back bank debts which in May 2019 had totalled £8.9 million. The college also owed £7.5 million to the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

The college in Stourbridge dated back over 100 years, and had a £5 million makeover in 2015.

The move was met with local opposition, including from Conservative MP Margot James. Following the news, she led a Westminster Hall debate on adult learning and vocational skills in the area.

BMet is currently in talks to sell the site to Old Swinford Hospital, a £12,000 a year state boarding school, for an undisclosed fee.

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Shrewsbury College Group in grade four Ofsted battle

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From front Exclusive

A college is battling Ofsted to prevent the publication of a grade four report after inspectors claimed to have found serious safeguarding failures.

Shrewsbury Colleges Group, which teaches more than 9,000 students mostly aged 16 to 18, is set to receive an 'inadequate' rating following an inspection in November.

But the college has insisted the judgement is "wrong", with the principal declaring that he has "never experienced anything like this inspection" in 27 years in education.

The college has denied safeguarding was "ineffective" and claimed the "judgement was changed on the final day of the inspection without adequate explanation" after Ofsted ran out of

time to check evidence. Shrewsbury is a national hotspot for county lines (see box out) but the college told *FE Week* "there was no line of inquiry regarding county lines".

It did admit, however, that West Mercia Police were called to an incident during the inspection, after a suspended student tried to regain entry to college.

A spokesperson claimed the force "have reassured us, in the light of enquiries by this Ofsted inspection team, that they consider our college campuses to be safe".

Shrewsbury Colleges Group advertises itself as Shropshire's largest provider of post-16 education – which teaches 70 per cent of all 16 to 18 students in the county.

Ofsted is currently set to report that students and staff do not feel safe and the college had not taken sufficient steps to help ensure their safety.

Inspectors also allegedly found

that staff required to carry out site security roles have not received adequate training and necessary risk assessments to ensure effective safeguarding covering the college estate were not in place.

The college denies these accusations.

Principal James Staniforth claimed the inspection team did not provide any evidence related to students not feeling safe. He said the college provided the inspection team with policies and actions taken to ensure the safety of students as well as detailed records of staff training.

Staniforth added: "It appears that the inspection team confused the college estates team with the site duty team and safeguarding team, and mistakenly concluded that the estates team were solely responsible for activities that are actually managed by the site duty and safeguarding teams."

He also said the college has a



Shrewsbury College

Shrewsbury: a national hotspot for county lines

Shrewsbury appears to be a hot-bed for drug trafficking. County lines have been documented between Shrewsbury and cities including Birmingham, Liverpool and London. Jailed drug dealers and organised gangs operating in the area have been caught with heroin and crack cocaine.

According to the National Crime Agency, 'county lines' is a term used "when drug gangs from big cities expand their operations to smaller towns, often using violence to drive out local dealers and exploiting children and vulnerable people to sell drugs".

Young people can be used as drug runners or to move cash in order for dealers to try and avoid detection.

On Monday, the Shropshire Star reported that Shropshire's Head of Local Policing Chief Superintendent Tom Harding said: "The criminal exploitation of vulnerable people, which includes county lines, has been a priority for West Mercia Police for a long time.

"Work is constantly on-going 24/7 365 days a year with our partner agencies to protect and safeguard those who may be vulnerable to being targeted by county line

drug dealers."

The next day it was reported by The Times that the prime minister will oversee a new Cabinet committee with a focus on county lines gangs. Boris Johnson also told the BBC he wants "to see the county lines drugs gangs wound up", signalling the importance being placed on their eradication.

Last week academics warned that academic institutions are increasingly being targeted by county lines drug networks as a possible market for class A drugs, according to the Guardian.

In October 2019, the home secretary Priti Patel announced the government would spend £20 million on a new package of measures to tackle county lines drug trafficking.

County lines are now being picked up by Ofsted as a safeguarding issue.

They were mentioned in an Ofsted report of a primary school (St Oswald's CofE Aided Primary School), which took place in the same month as Shrewsbury Colleges Group's inspection, with the education watchdog asking leaders to "devise ways to check that all adults are confident to explain their duties with regards to county lines".

statutory Prevent Risk Assessment, one of the items inspectors allegedly failed to inspect "as a consequence of running out of time".

It was claimed the safeguarding system, annual safeguarding reports, site security policies, fire logs and assessments and other health and safety records were also not reviewed and the inspectorate did not discuss their concerns with the college safeguarding teams.

Staniforth continued: "Nor did the team have the time to consider the views of outside agencies. West Mercia Police have confirmed that they have 'no concerns' regarding any of the college's three campuses.

"As a college principal, teaching professional and parent I can't stress enough how important it is that all institutions are safe places to study. We would not be contesting the judgement if any part of the colleges were unsafe."

The college said that some fire call points were disabled during the inspection "in order to stop further false alarms" after a fault and a student caused two separate false alarms.

A spokesperson said: "Staff were asked to stand by those call points and monitor them – which meant there was in fact a greater level of safety than our normal high threshold."

Shrewsbury Colleges Group is based on three campuses with a

turnover of £23 million.

Staniforth insisted the college's campuses are "safe places to study" and that Shrewsbury Colleges Group is "confident that our excellent staff have the right safeguarding processes and procedures in place".

He added: "We respect Ofsted's work and mission but this particular judgement is wrong.

"In 27 years in working in education and having been through seven Ofsted inspections, I have never experienced anything like this inspection."

College chair Gordon Channon added: "We have a rich body of evidence to demonstrate that the safety and care of students in our colleges is of the upmost importance.

"We look forward to Ofsted having another chance to review that evidence. We very much hope that common sense prevails."

Shrewsbury Sixth Form College and Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology merged to become Shrewsbury Colleges Group in August 2016.

Both FE providers were rated 'good' in their final inspections before the merger.

The group's first inspection took place between November 26 and November 29 2019.

If the draft report is published, it would be the first general FE college to receive a grade four in nearly two years.



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- ▶ **Digital skills** - Vital for all learners
- ▶ **Mental well-being**
- ▶ **Apprenticeships** - Transition to Apprenticeship Standards

News

Highest principal pay plummets

BILLY CAMDEN
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Exclusive

The top ten highest college salaries have dropped by an average of more than £50,000 after six of the principals left, an FE Week investigation has found.

The single biggest cut totalled £136,000 – from £294,000 to £158,000 – after a change in leadership at North Hertfordshire College.

Of the four colleges where the principal or chief executive remained unchanged, two bosses increased their salary, one reduced but has since retired and the fourth declined to comment.

After being shown the findings, Association of Colleges (AoC) chief executive David Hughes said the Department for Education has “sent a clear message to college governing bodies that decisions on senior staff pay needs to be evidence-based, proportionate and [offer] value for money”.

“I know that governing bodies have heard the message, and I’m confident that the top job in a college remains an attractive and rewarding one,” he added.

FE Week carried out the analysis by looking at the ten highest paid college leaders in the latest available Department for Education accounts spreadsheet (2017/18), and then asking each college for their 2018/19 or current pay.

If there were multiple principals in one year, we have used the most relevant salary in a single year for either the former or new highest paid leader (see table).

The average for the top ten in 2017/18 has fallen from £255,000 to £202,000 – a 21 per cent drop (though this calculation assumes that the salary for the college that refused to comment remained the same).

When looking at the national picture of principal salaries, the average in 2017/18 sat at just £136,000 for 257 colleges in England, according to the latest available data published by the DfE.

The figures are in stark contrast to university vice-chancellor pay. They averaged take-home pay of more than £250,000 each in the same year.

Of the ten highest basic salaries paid to university bosses in 2017/18, the

David Hughes



Principal salary (incl. bonus where reported)			
College name	2018	2019	% difference from 2018 to 2019
Gateshead College	£344,000 Judith Doyle	£255,000 Judith Doyle	- 26
Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College	£279,000 Garry Phillips	£200,000 Karen Redhead	- 28
Birmingham Metropolitan College	£266,000 Andrew Cleaves	£160,000 Cliff Hall	- 40
West Nottinghamshire College	£257,000 Asha Khemka	£140,000* Andrew Cropley	- 46
Leeds City College	£233,000 Colin Booth	£244,000 Colin Booth	+ 5
NCG	£227,000 Joe Docherty	£210,000* Liz Bromley	- 7
LTE Group	£224,000 John Thornhill	Declined to comment John Thornhill	
North Hertfordshire College	£294,000** Matt Hamnett	£158,000 Kit Davies	- 46
Burton and South Derbyshire College	£218,000 Dawn Ward	£233,000 Dawn Ward	+ 7
Capital City Colleges Group	£210,000 Andy Wilson	£195,000 Roy O'Shaughnessy	- 7
*Figure for 19/20 as no permanent principal in 18/19 ** Figure for 16/17 as it had multiple principals in 17/18			

average was £395,000.

And the average for the ten highest paid chief executives in multi-academy trusts in that year was £270,000.

The majority of the colleges in FE Week's analysis which reduced their leaders' salary did so after changing their top boss.

Five of them have either been handed a financial notice of concern or been placed in FE Commissioner intervention in recent years.

The largest fall was seen at North Hertfordshire College. Over the course of 2017/18 it had two principals after Matt Hamnett resigned mid-way through the academic year.

His salary reached £294,000 in 2016/17, and their new permanent boss, Kit Davies, earned £158,000 in 2018/19. Davies was on a basic salary of £140,000 plus a payment of £17,958 towards the removal of a long-term incentive plan associated with a previous role.

Cash-strapped Birmingham Metropolitan College (BMet) had the second biggest difference. Its principal in 2017/18, Andrew Cleaves, was paid £266,000, but new boss Cliff Hall takes home

£160,000.

A spokesperson for BMet said the college “undertook a benchmarking exercise prior to the current principal's appointment”, because both the board and the incoming principal were “keen to ensure that the new chief executive's salary was in line with sector norms”.

They added that “it was an important signal to the staff of the college.”

A similar situation occurred at West Nottinghamshire College (WNC). Its previous principal, Dame Asha Khemka, earned £257,000 in 2017/18 before resigning at the start of 2018/19.

The new permanent principal is Andrew Cropley, who has a salary of £140,000.

A spokesperson for WNC said: “In recognition of the fact that the college's turnover has reduced from £51 million to £31 million, the new board of governors, formed in late 2018, made the decision to align the principal's remuneration in-line with sector benchmarks for a college of this size.”

Meanwhile, Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College paid its new boss, Karen Redhead, £200,000 in 2018/19. Former principal Garry Phillips earned £279,000 the year previous.

NCG, one of the largest college groups in the country, has also seen its chief executive leave in recent years to be replaced by someone on a lower wage.

Joe Docherty was paid £227,000 in 2017/18 before quitting in October 2018. An interim boss was in place for the remainder of that academic year, and Liz Bromley has since become the permanent chief executive on £210,000 a year.

And Capital City College Group has reduced its top leader's salary from £210,000 to £195,000.

The highest paid principal in England in 2017/18 was Judith Doyle at Gateshead College, who retired with immediate effect on December 31 following the launch of an independent investigation into an unexplained £6 million deficit.

She was paid £344,000 in that year, a sum which took into account an “accrual for a remuneration scheme payable in respect of a three-year period”. In 2018/19, Doyle took home £255,000.

The two colleges to see their highest paid officer's salary increase were Leeds City College (now known as the Luminate Education Group) and Burton and South Derbyshire College. Both of their leaders, Colin Booth and Dawn Ward, respectively, have been in post for a number of years.

While the DfE has clamped down on chief executive pay in multi-academy trusts and vice-chancellor wages in universities, including writing to

demand a justification of salaries of over £150,000, no such action has been taken against colleges.

The AoC's David Hughes said: “The job of running a college has become incredibly difficult – partly because of the complex and unpredictable systems that DfE itself oversees.”

The AoC developed its own pay code in 2018. It includes guidance such as not allowing seniors to get a pay rise unless all staff do, and ensuring that the top boss cannot be involved in deciding their own pay.

Whilst principals' pay hasn't hit the heights of vice-chancellors', college bosses still come in for criticism for their top salaries, especially when teaching staff are refused pay rises.

In 2016/17 the University and College Union (UCU) lambasted principals as “greedy and hopelessly out of touch”, and in recent years have held numerous substantial strikes across the country.

After being shown FE Week's analysis, UCU head of further education Andrew Harden said: “Staff have been told time and again that there is no money for pay, but the same restraint has not always been applied to those at the top.

“It is time for colleges to make good their commitment to spend extra funds on dealing with the pay crisis in our colleges and working to close the gap between college and school teachers.”



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Ex-SFA deputy director slams funding management ahead of Ney review

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Exclusive

An ex-deputy director of the government's skills funding agency has called for a return to "supportive" contract management for providers.

Writing in FE Week (see below), Tony Allen has criticised the way the Education and Skills Funding Agency manages funding contracts ahead of an imminent report by Dame Mary Ney into oversight of college finances.

Ney's review is expected to heavily criticise the ESFA for the calculations it uses to determine the financial health scoring and grading; as had it been more robust, it could have intervened in failing providers sooner.

Allen said when he worked at the then named Skills Funding Agency: "We had a much better sense of what was going on."

"We advised and supported, managed risks and dealt with issues as they were arising. Face-to-face support by individual and group methods headed off many early problems."

Allen worked in government for 13 years in a variety of roles including director of the SFA's Large Companies Unit, before starting his own apprenticeship consultancy in 2016.

The SFA replaced Learning Skills Councils in 2010 and handled funding for the FE and skills sector before being replaced by the ESFA in 2017.

As part of Department for Education staffing cuts in 2016, the 'supportive' approach was dropped in favour of what Allen summarised as "a service desk approach" that is unusual in the public sector for allowing organisations to be given millions of pounds and told to "get on with it".

"It was made clear that giving advice and support to colleges, and especially independent training providers, was not part of a 'funding body's' role," he says.



Dame Mary Ney

"Nobody was interested in the positive side of contract management or the benefits that could accrue, such as promoting apprenticeship growth."

The agency now calculates financial health with a scoring system which allows providers to self-grade themselves by inputting three measures: one based on cash, another on debt and

failures among providers, including First4Skills, 3aaa and Hadlow College.

He is the latest sector leader to go public with criticism of the ESFA's approach to overseeing college finances: Association of Colleges deputy chief executive Julian Gravatt said last week that the ESFA's current approach was in need of change.

Aside from Ney's report, it is also expected the National Audit Office's value for money review on the management of colleges' financial sustainability will be published in the summer.

A Department for Education spokesperson said: "The ESFA operates a risk-based approach to the oversight and monitoring of colleges, so that those at risk get regular contact with ESFA staff."

"Last year the department announced an independent review into how the government monitors colleges' finances and financial management. Results of the review will be published in due course."

TONY
ALLEN

CEO,
AAS Ltd



Preventing financial and corporate failures is a matter of relationships

If the sector's reputation is ever to recover from the damage caused by college and ITP failures, the ESFA needs to be more than just a 'funding body', writes Tony Allen

As an ex-deputy director of the SFA, my interest has been piqued by the news that Dame Mary Ney's anticipated report into college finances will highlight serious shortcomings on the part of the organisation.

The report is likely to focus on some of the more technical aspects of college finances. However, there is one important and easy-to-grasp reason why colleges and independent training providers (ITPs) fail, and I hope Dame Mary will touch on it: the lack of effective contract management and support from the ESFA.

In many respects, Ian Pryce, CEO of Bedford Colleges Group, summed it up perfectly when he said, "You spot things early when you have strong

human relationships."

From its inception as 47 LSCs in 2001, up until 2015, by which time it had become the SFA, the sector could rely on effective contract management for all providers. Towards the end of this period, colleges were managed by regional teams, and the employers and largest ITPs by a national team. Their role was to get to know the colleges and ITPs, to provide support, protect public investment and promote government priorities. Unlike our current reactive way of working, always on the back foot as it responds to problems, the system was proactive in encouraging the "right" behaviours.

Whatever the actual structures involved, having people within the SFA who regularly interacted with senior staff at colleges and providers brought many benefits. We had a much better sense of what was going on. We advised and supported, managed risks and dealt with issues as they were arising. Face-to-face support by

individual and group methods headed off many early problems. The nature of the relationship meant that colleges and providers were much more likely to share their concerns and worries than they are now.

"We must restore proper, consistent and supportive regulatory oversight"

In 2016, as part of DfE-mandated staffing reductions, the SFA decided that "supportive" contract management as we had known it was no longer needed. It was made clear that giving advice and support to colleges, and especially ITPs, was not part of a "funding body's" role. Frankly,

it was believed that the risk could be managed by a service desk approach, and by analysing data in Coventry. Nobody was interested in the positive side of contract management or the benefits that could accrue, such as promoting apprenticeship growth.

As I was leaving the then-SFA, I pointed out to the senior team the implications of what they were doing, but the value of what we had been doing for many years was effectively dismissed.

Yet there is a clear correlation between the lack of supportive contract management and what has happened since. We have seen a number of high-profile college "financial" failures, not to mention the demise of Positive Outcomes, First4Skills and 3aaa, to name but a few on the ITP front.

Realistically, even if the ESFA, as it is now called, still had teams in place managing colleges and providers as effectively as in the past, they would

not have been able altogether to prevent some of the more recent failures. The sad fact is that a determined individual in any organisation can hide the truth from those above.

However, the ESFA would have been aware much earlier of the problems that some colleges and large providers were facing. Even that worst-case scenario would have been better than what we have now.

No other part of the public sector allows an organisation with a contract worth millions of pounds a year to effectively be told to "get on with it".

Whatever other reforms Dame Mary's report suggests, until we restore proper, consistent and supportive regulatory oversight based on relationships, we will simply continue to see college and ITP failures. Our sector deserves better than to keep seeing its reputation battered in this way.

Retirement date brought forward for suspended Highbury principal

BILLY CAMDEN
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

A college principal who was suspended following government intervention has brought forward her retirement date.

Stella Mbubaegbu announced on Thursday that she will officially leave Highbury College at the end of April this year, instead of July.

The college said she has decided to leave early to “enable the college to accelerate the search for her successor, and to put in place new leadership”.

The FE Commissioner’s team was sent into Highbury by Department for Education minister Lord Agnew in October after FE Week revealed the principal had claimed £150,000 expenses in four years.

The spending included numerous first class flights, five-star hotels, travel in luxury cars, a £350 bill –

including a £45 lobster and nearly £100 on cocktails – at a Michelin star restaurant, and a £434 pair of designer headphones.

Mbubaegbu was suspended in November.

Highbury said today that following separate whistleblowing allegations suggesting wrongdoing by the principal, over a year ago a “thorough and independent” investigation was commissioned.

The investigation concluded that Mbubaegbu had “throughout acted in accordance with extant college policies and procedures, and with the approval of the college chair at the time”.

In December, Penny Wycherley took over as Highbury’s interim principal, while Martin Doel became interim chair.

In announcing her decision to retire, Mbubaegbu, who was made a CBE in 2008 for her services to further education, said: “I am enormously

proud of all that we have achieved together at the college, and in particular the success of our students and staff.

“You have inspired, challenged and motivated me to do better, and I wish every one of you continued future success.

“I have now decided that I will leave on April 30, 2020, in order that the college can accelerate its plans to recruit an appropriate successor to my role.

“Until then I will work remotely to facilitate an effective handover to the new leadership.”

The college said Doel “thanked Stella on behalf of the college board for her many years of dedicated service to the college in which much was achieved that will have a lasting effect upon the lives of countless students and the communities that the college serves”.

Since the FE Commissioner’s intervention, Highbury has been



moved into “supervised college status”. A notice to improve was published yesterday.


In recent years the college has been locked in legal battle with a state in Nigeria to recover a £1.4 million debt after a technical education project in the country failed.

The college recorded a £2.48 million deficit in its 2017/18 accounts. Leaders axed its sixth form and had to make staff redundant this year owing to financial pressures.

Highbury’s Ofsted grade dropped from ‘outstanding’ to ‘requires improvement’ in June 2018.

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Profile

Introducing...

DR NEIL BENTLEY-GOCKMANN OBE

Chief Executive, WorldSkills UK

JL DUTAUT
JL.DUTAUT@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Neil Bentley-Gockmann has found his professional “sweet spot”, so the Harvard course in authentic leadership he attended a few years ago would call it. As CEO of WorldSkills UK – the charity commissioned by the ESFA to manage the nation’s involvement in a rapidly growing global competition to develop young people’s employability skills – his work is aligned with his passions.

“As we prepare to leave the EU, we’re going to be internationally exposed”

But it wasn’t an obvious destination for the “West Belfast born-and-bred”

executive who hails from a working-class family of skilled workers. “My dad was a process operator. My uncle was a successful plumber. My granddad was a painter decorator by trade. My brother’s a train driver and my sister was working in hospitality before she started her family. My nieces are on apprenticeships, doing aircraft engineering. Which is fantastic because they’re young women and going into male-dominated professions. I was the odd one out.”

Bentley-Gockmann is proficient in French and German, and remains modest about his Italian. “I had an aptitude for languages and that was encouraged at school.” His teachers wanted him “in a sense, to have aspirations beyond Belfast”, but his starting point has kept him grounded in the value of skills, and vocational and technical education. “I just happened to be good at other things.” He tells me about the English teacher who encouraged him to do drama to build his confidence “because I was quite an introvert”. It’s hard to imagine him ever having been the retiring type, and his

CV sitting in front of me certainly suggests otherwise.

“It’s a bit of a cliché,” he says in a self-deprecatory way. “First person in my family to go to university... Social mobility... There was an element of pride. But also there was a sort of a lack of understanding of what it would mean and where it could take me. My mum wasn’t pleased that I was leaving Belfast, to be honest.”

But three factors were driving him to go. “One was my languages, wanting to see a world beyond Belfast. The second was growing up gay in Belfast. In the 1980s that was not a pleasant experience. And thirdly, Belfast at that time wasn’t a great place in general, because of the violence and the Troubles.

“People in general were being discriminated against and denied opportunities”, he says. He left “very uncertain of myself and who I was and what I was going to be.”

Something you won’t find on his CV is that he attended Swansea University first and dropped out. “I was struggling to come out,” he says. “I went back to Belfast and got a part-time job. I ended up going off to work in France as a campsite rep, and that gave me the confidence then to go to Cardiff University and come out in my first week of being there.”

He stayed at Cardiff long enough to earn a PhD. His thesis was on race



Neil speaking at a WorldSkills UK event

discrimination and trade unionism.

It’s an interesting philosophical background for a man who spent nearly 12 years at the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), eventually becoming its second-in-command. “I absolutely loved it,” he says. Bentley-Gockmann’s CV is a roll-call of organisations at the forefront of some of the most pressing social justice issues of our age. At Stonewall and OUTstanding, he advocated for gay rights. At the Carbon Trust, for a sustainable future. In both, he used the considerable skillset he’d developed at the CBI to influence and develop policy.

A pivotal moment was taking the Harvard authentic leadership course. “I was in a leadership role, I was out, and the question I went with was: am I a gay leader, or a leader who happens to be gay? What I came back with was a whole different set of criteria for success in work and life.”

With a new clarity about his passions

– education, diversity and climate change – within a year, he left CBI – “a huge, emotional decision”.

Enacting his new perspective in his personal life first, Bentley-Gockmann and his architect husband, Stephen, took time out to build a house. “We decided to move out of London, to build an eco home, and to live those values as best we could.”

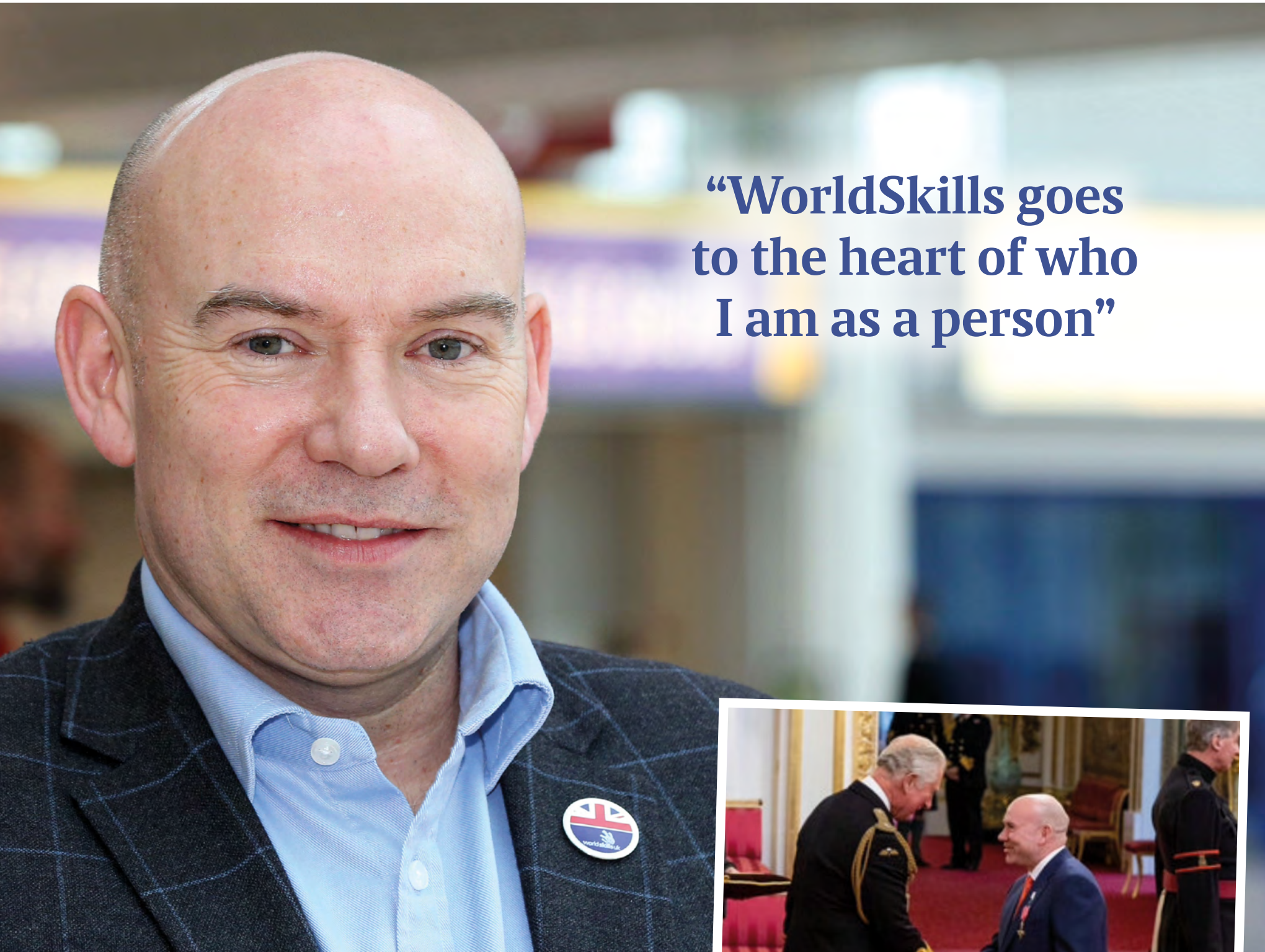
Professionally, social justice took the lead. “I took a role at OUTstanding while on the board at Stonewall to pursue working with businesses, helping them create environments where if you happen to be LGBT you can succeed.”

He was approached by Find Your Future, as it was then called. “When I looked into it, it was WorldSkills. In my first job at the CBI, as head of skills and employment, I had supported bringing WorldSkills to London in 2011.”

With no background in the education sector per se, his obvious



Neil alongside members of Team UK at the official send off before Kazan 2019



excitement at that opportunity is an intriguing response from someone who had a unique platform to fight the discrimination he had experienced. “I think it was my own personal experience of teachers who really invest in you. I had a French teacher who left school because her husband moved to Scotland. When I dropped out of university, she was in touch. And when I needed to go for an interview in Edinburgh for the job in France, she put me up. Now I work with so many talented people who go above and beyond to invest in the next generation.”

That might be another cliché: the first child to go to university wanting to “give something back”. Nevertheless, there is a political rhetoric that goes to the heart of our soon-to-be post-Brexit nation’s soul-searching, about left-behind communities and university policy draining their talent.

For Bentley-Gockmann, the WorldSkills gig is all about the

community he left behind. “It goes to the heart of who I am as a person. With my family background and my personal experience of the HE route, I think it’s too easy to say that it’s one or the other. There has to be a more blended solution where you’re creating opportunities for young people wherever they’re from to pursue their ambitions.”

“We’ve got to tackle vocational snobbery”

“What we’ve got to do is to tackle vocational snobbery and prejudice. As we’re preparing to leave the European Union, we’re going to be internationally exposed. We need to demonstrate that the UK is working to develop world-class skills to attract inward investment, to create jobs across the

UK for those left-behind communities.”

WorldSkills, Bentley-Gockmann believes, has an important role to play in demonstrating not just what excellence looks like here, but in bringing back insights to drive standards up. “We have to take a leaf out of China, Japan, Korea, Brazil and Russia’s book and look at upskilling the economy.”

“They train young people to WorldSkills standards, which is the only global skills benchmark going. The UK has been in the top 10 for the past decade and has just dropped out of it. We have to make sure we get back in.”

“An Olympic effort?”, I ask.

“It is Herculean to actually join all of this up. And that’s why I think the UK should be considering hosting WorldSkills again. It can be a real catalyst – the focal point for creating a legacy, like the Olympics.”

“Surely London can’t host again?” I

press. “Is your plan to bring WorldSkills to Belfast in 2025?”

He laughs. “Wouldn’t that be brilliant? But wherever it would be hosted, we’ve got to connect Belfast and Glasgow and Cardiff, Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol with WorldSkills. I look at what Russia has done in hosting WorldSkills this last year. They used that as a massive game changer for their skills system. They’re embedding WorldSkills standards into the technical education system all across the country.”

So much for what WorldSkills can do for the UK, but Bentley-Gockmann is also focused on the organization itself, and anti-discrimination still underpins his work. “I’m bringing young people

in who might not necessarily have an opportunity to join our programme – from BAME communities, LGBT, young people with learning or physical disabilities...”

“The next leader could be somebody who’s come up through the vocational technical education route and who can talk about their lived experience with even more authenticity.”

Like imagining an introvert Bentley-Gockmann, it’s hard to picture a more authentic leader than the WorldSkills UK CEO.

And if you see him at the opening ceremony of WorldSkills 2025 in Belfast or Birmingham, don’t think for a second he’s finished the job. It’ll be just the start of transforming the sector.



Neil receiving his OBE from Prince Charles

News



London will be first to launch regional AEB learner survey

BILLY CAMDEN
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The Greater London Authority is planning to become the first devolved area to launch a regional adult education budget learner survey.

This would likely be in addition to the three separate surveys already undertaken annually by colleges, contractors on behalf of the Department for Education and by Ofsted during inspection.

The plan for a London Learner Survey is part of mayor Sadiq Khan's approach to measuring the impact of provision, after his authority took control of the capital's annual £306 million AEB in August.

The GLA commissioned a feasibility study for a "large-scale London Learner Survey" in December, which is expected to report back in the summer. Full rollout is planned for autumn 2021.

Mary Vine-Morris, the area director for London at the Association of Colleges, said the regional survey would be "largely welcomed" and would be the best way to capture social, learning and employment outcomes for the AEB.

She added that the AoC will continue

to work with the GLA to ensure the survey is accessible to all learners (including those with SEND) and that it complements – or even better, replaces – some of the "costly survey activity which colleges currently undertake".

The London Learner Survey would target "priority impact areas", including progression into employment and further education, in-work progression, improvements to health and wellbeing, social integration and self-efficacy.

Agenda minutes for a meeting on November 26, 2019 state that there are "issues" with current sources of data on economic outcomes from learning in London.

Provider data collected through the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) is "partial, with GLA analysis demonstrating that no destination data was collected for 43 per cent of learners completing adult skills provision in 2017-18".

And Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) data, published through the Further Education Outcome Based Success Measures data release, is "more accurate and complete, but there is currently a time lag of at least two years between course completion and the data being published. There is no current

collection of social impact measures on a London-wide basis".

The agenda minutes claimed that the new London Learner Survey would allow for the collection of data on social impact and in-work progression that is "not possible through the existing ILR infrastructure and will also provide the GLA with more timely information on employment destinations".

They added that a survey would also give the authority greater control over data on the outcomes achieved by learners, as there are currently "significant restrictions" on the use and publication of the ILR data, which is owned by the Department for Education.

It would also help the authority in its plans to move towards an impact-based funding model for the AEB, according to minutes from a meeting of the GLA's outcomes for Londoners advisory group in September.

Full details of how the survey would look, including its cost, sample size and timescales for implementation, will be brought to the GLA in the summer once the feasibility study is completed.

The GLA is planning to run a pilot survey with a sample of providers in spring 2021, before rolling out the survey to all AEB learners from autumn 2021.



The authority said successful implementation of a survey will require support from AEB providers, so it will introduce new requirements for providers to support data collection of any future learner survey through its funding rules and grant-funding agreements.

Officials at the authority recognised a "risk" that concerns will be raised in the sector about the "perceived burden on initially collecting data on employment destinations two different ways – through the ILR and through the London Learner Survey".

The GLA said it will mitigate this by exploring through the feasibility study how data collected through the survey could be shared with providers to return through the ILR.

Minutes from the authority's AEB board meeting in November state that the prospect of a London Learner Survey attracted "largely positive" views from stakeholders.

They added that the mayor "welcomed the fact that London was the first devolved area to look at coordinating a regional survey and emphasised the need to ensure that early access to learner data translated into an agile response to employer and learner needs".



VICE-PRINCIPAL FINANCE & FACILITIES

Location: Waterlooville, Hampshire

Salary: £80k



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We are looking for a Vice-Principal with proven experience/skills in the following areas:

- Advanced leadership skills;
- Financial acumen;
- The ability to respond in a rapidly changing environment;
- The ability to respond to sector opportunities;
- Advanced communication skills;
- Open management style and most importantly a sense of humour!

More information on the position can be found here – hsdc.ac.uk/vp

Benefits

- 37 Days Annual Leave;
- Option for Pension scheme;
- Free on-site gym;
- Staff development opportunities;
- Staff recognition scheme, Employee Recommendation Incentive and access to many more benefits.

Closing Date: Monday 10th February 2020
Interview Dates: 18th and 19th March 2020

This position is full time, however, HSDC is proud to support flexible working opportunities and therefore applications for flexible working will be considered.

Safeguarding

The College is committed to safeguarding and promotes the welfare of all learners. It expects all staff to share this commitment. All successful applicants will be required to undertake an enhanced DBS check and to provide proof of their eligibility to work in the UK.

We will not accept applications from agencies for this position.



Opportunities at PeoplePlus

We are currently recruiting for a range of Teaching and Management roles across our Prison Education division.

We are looking for Education Managers to lead the delivery of quality education as well as Tutors delivering in a range of subjects from Functional Skills, IT and PSD to more vocational disciplines such as Bricklaying, Plastering and Construction.

We operate within 22 prisons across the East of England and the Midlands areas. For a full list of vacancies please visit peopleplus.co.uk/work-with-us

This is an exciting time to join PeoplePlus, we have recently become a 'One to Watch' organisation in the Times Top 100 Best Companies survey.

Here at PeoplePlus reward means far more than just pay. Your total reward package as a PeoplePlus colleague also includes a variety of different benefits as well as incentive and recognition schemes for our colleagues.

Our generous and competitive benefits package includes; enhanced annual leave of 30 days per annum for a full time role, a paid PeoplePlus Life Event Day each year, a paid Volunteering Day each year, a Pension, Life Insurance, an Employee Assistance Programme to access help and support 24 hours a day every day of the year, the opportunity to buy shares in the company through our Sharesave scheme, Refer a Friend reward scheme, Cycle to Work scheme and access to our employee benefits portal Perkbox which gives you discounts on hundreds of products, services, shops and entertainment.

PRINCIPAL

TRURO & PENWITH COLLEGE



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, 31 January 2020

Interviews: Week commencing Monday, 10 February 2020.

Previous applicants will be carried forward.

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.





Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality

Location: West London College **Salary:** Up to £110k **Reporting to:** CEO / Principal

We are seeking an exceptional Deputy Principal to join our strengthened senior leadership team at a very exciting time in our journey. We have made significant improvements in our financial position, and we are now focused on realising the huge potential that West London College has in fully meeting the needs of our students, staff, employers and communities. We are looking for a suitably skilled and experienced person who shares our vision and ambition to be the leading college in west London for technical and vocational education and skills training. The successful candidate will be highly effective in their pursuit of continuous improvement of standards, student outcomes, organisational effectiveness and curriculum efficiency. This role will provide a capable and ambitious leader with significant career prospects and the opportunity to make a major contribution to the educational, economic and employment landscape of the nation's capital city.

ABOUT THE ORGANISATION:

West London College is committed to meeting the needs of its students and stakeholders, through collaboration and innovation across its curriculum and student services. Ealing, Hammersmith & West London College – known as West London College - is a large general and further education college with five main campuses at Hammersmith, Ealing, Southall, Park Royal and the west London Construction Academy. The College covers 12 miles across west London and enjoys a positive relationship with both of its respective local authorities; Ealing and Hammersmith & Fulham.

In 2017 the College was graded 'Good' by Ofsted and the latest self-assessment aligns the judgements to the new EIF, with a significant focus on the quality of education and the actions being taken to continuously improve teaching, learning and assessment. Courses are offered in most subject areas, with the significant majority being those up to, and including, level two. Around three quarters of all enrolments are for adult learners, mostly studying part-time with the College. The College has a small cohort of apprentices and is looking to grow this provision aligned to the skills needs of west London. The College also has a small cohort of higher education students, which it is intending to grow. Commercial programmes are large and important part of the offer, and the College is seeing success in growing this income strand further.

The College intends to build on its emerging specialisms, particularly around construction and the built environment – a unique partnership between Berkeley and the West London Construction Academy has been awarded the Mayors' Construction Academy kite-mark for the quality of provision. Through the positive relationships with the two major London boroughs, increased 14-16 and high needs student numbers are highly likely due to exceptional student experience provided at the College.

ABOUT THE ROLE:

As Deputy Principal you'll take the strategic lead on curriculum, quality, student services and MIS across all five campuses. With your team of Assistant Principals, your skills and experience of FE leadership will enable you to effectively contribute towards moving things forward, whilst working closely with the CEO & Principal and a collaborative Executive Team to implement the new vision, mission and strategic objectives of the College.

WHO WE'RE LOOKING FOR:

It is expected you will be people-focused strategic leader with experience of leading improvements of a similar scale and complexity to those required at West London College. You will have significant experience of operating strategically across curriculum and quality functions.

Through adopting an holistic approach to developing the College's specialisms of the future, through corporate partnerships and stakeholder engagement, your focus on providing an outstanding student experience will be at the forefront of your planning and everything you do.

For further information about the role, or to arrange a confidential chat, please contact our executive search advisers at Peridot Partners:

Drew Richardson-Walsh
drew@peridotpartners.co.uk
07739 364 033

Sarah Szulczewski
sarahs@peridotpartners.co.uk
07841 017 043

Peridot

Closing date: 12pm Monday 3rd February 2020

<http://bit.ly/36r68rL>

 **Hammersmith & Fulham College**

 **Ealing Green College**

 **Southall Community College**

 **Park Royal College**

 **West London Construction Academy**

 **West London College**
wlc.ac.uk



Head of Management Information Services

£46,731 - £54,181 Per Annum

Walsall College is rated Ofsted 'Outstanding' with a number of campuses in around the borough of Walsall with modern facilities and environment for excellent learning and working. We have an annual turnover of circa £40 million, over 850 staff, nearly 15,000 students and a successful learning culture.

We are now looking for an experienced dynamic leader to join our college as Head of Management Information Services to continue our journey of success, who will be responsible for the data, information & funding integrity of the organisation through the management of appropriate information systems.

You will be an integral part of the Senior Management Team and a key operational lead, acting as an advisor and funding expert in funding decision-making and supporting the strategy to achieve further growth, with proactive analysis and recommendations.

Who we are looking for:

- An outstanding leader, who is well organised, can work under pressure, and has experience of managing MIS services.
- Someone who has extensive technical experience and experience of sector data management, analysis,

reporting and compliance.

- A person who has experience of working within a regulated environment and the ability to demonstrate an understanding of the challenges facing the FE sector.

What we are looking for:

- Experience of organisational review and change management in a large organisation.
- Strong analytical and planning skills with the ability to interpret, evaluate and communicate complex information accurately and effectively.
- Extensive technical experience and experience of sector data management, analysis, reporting and compliance.

Walsall College is uniquely and proudly vocational. Offering a wide range of courses from Further Education and Apprenticeships through to Higher Education. Our greatest passion is unleashing the potential of individuals, communities and businesses and our greatest legacy is the talent of our students: skilled, professional and enterprising.

This is an exciting time for Walsall College and an excellent

opportunity for the right individual to play a key role in our future success. Come and join us if you have what we are looking for.

Closing date for applications is Monday 20 January 2020 at 12 noon.

Interviews are planned for Thursday 30 January 2020.

Should you want to talk through any of the details please contact Matthew Brown, Director of Finance & MIS. To arrange this, please contact his PA, Melanie Smith on 01922 651137.

We are passionate about promoting equality of opportunity and creating a working environment where diversity is recognised and celebrated and everyone has the chance to reach their full potential. Our environment is diverse in character and student population. We particularly welcome applications from candidates from Black Minority Ethnic origin and those with a disability.

Walsall College is committed to safeguarding our children and young people/adults at risk of harm. We uphold fundamental British Values and expect all our employees to do the same. All appointments are subject to safer recruitment checks, including previous employment checks and an enhanced DBS Check.

To apply, please visit: <https://www.walsallcollege.ac.uk/jobs/>

Ofsted finds learners not aware they're apprentices

FRASER WHIELDON
FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK

A provider of management courses has been declared 'inadequate' by Ofsted after it was found learners and their bosses did not know they were on the apprenticeship programme.

EQV (UK) has been handed a grade four for its provision to nearly 80 apprentices, who are either on the level 3 team leader or level 5 operational manager standard.

The Leicester-based training firm was previously suspended from taking on new starts in July after being found to have made 'insufficient progress' in all three areas of an early monitoring report.

In today's full inspection report, Ofsted reported that apprentices "do not benefit from a well-planned programme of study" and "most" apprentices and their line managers

"do not know that they are on an apprenticeship".

"Too many" apprentices also do not develop the "wider range of knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to progress in their careers", they "just complete their management qualification".

The provision mostly focused on learners completing qualifications from the Institute of Leadership and Management, the website for which offers diplomas at both level 3 and 5 which can be run alongside the team leader and operational manager apprenticeships.

Ofsted said too many apprentices leave their training early, having not received feedback or support to make better progress and while "a small minority recognise they have gained new knowledge and skills", the majority "only have their existing knowledge and skills confirmed".

Inspectors reported that managers,

trainers and assessors do not use an apprentice's prior learning to plan the curriculum: level 5 apprentices who completed a level 3 in management cannot identify any new knowledge gained.

Assessors and trainers do not work together to ensure apprentices, who are pulled from the public and private sector, can develop greater knowledge in workshops and then apply this to the workplace and their assignments.

But leaders and managers do not review the performance of trainers and assessors. Instead, they relying on feedback from awarding bodies and "very brief critiques" of workshops.

The watchdog did say most apprentices gain new confidence in their roles while at the provider and both feel and are safe, thanks to effective safeguarding measures.

Following EQV 'insufficient progress' monitoring report in July, a follow-up monitoring visit in August found

the provider was making 'reasonable progress' in safeguarding.

As of last week, the register of apprenticeship training providers still showed EQV as being banned from new apprentices.

Private providers that receive a grade four from Ofsted typically have their funding contracts with the Education and Skills Funding Agency terminated early.

EQV was approached for comment.

Readers' reply



EMAIL



TWITTER



FACEBOOK



WEBSITE

Improving teacher wellbeing requires commitment at all levels

I don't think this just applies to teachers in FE. There are many classed as support staff who are working long hours as other staff are cut due to restructuring. Colleges are recognising this, but it needs addressing across the sector.

Marguerite Hogg

Great article, really hope something changes, and soon. Too many good people are being lost. Students bear the brunt of this issue - and they are the ones we are meant to be helping

Ant

Radical college reform is inevitable. Let's embrace it

This: "The focus has to be local and the services must be integrated with all the

other local services needed and used by local people." She's absolutely right. Local service for local needs.

Jayne Stigger

"History teaches us that the Tories 'get' FE. Compare the incorporation of colleges under John Major with the Blair administration's failure." And the answer is apparently localism. Wasn't that what incorporation (and the recent area reviews) effectively curtailed?

Bill Esmond

Leaked FE Commissioner report reveals extent of HR scandal at Hull College

The culture of fear and threat of dismissal was pervasive from Sept 2017 onwards, leading to unjustified suspensions. Stress and mental health issues of experienced, committed and hard-

working staff.

Feral Art School

DfE plans for all 'outstanding' providers to be inspected over next five years

Bring it on. We have been asking for an inspection now for a number of years, and relish the challenge to show that we are still a great provider.

Tina Hooks

Small employers finally given access to all registered providers - but for just 3 apprentices

Small employers finally given access to all registered providers - but for just 3 apprentices Interesting times ahead - with the cap on three apprentices for non-levy payers, to start with, I think this is fair to the levy payers

Barbara Fenning

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Government commissioned college finance review to slam ESFA



Since the demise of contract management teams under the previous CEO, the ESFA has, at best, inadequate scrutiny over college and independent training provider contracts. Is there any other part of government that would manage multi-million pound contracts in so lax a manner? Imagine it!

Tony Allen

Experts

MARK TRINICK

Governor, London South East Colleges



How colleges can recruit the community governors they need

Becoming a college governor is an intimidating prospect, writes Mark Trinick. Recognising this is the first step to recruiting your college community's brightest and most committed

Community governors bring real value to a college's decision making. This much is clear to me now, but I faced some barriers to becoming one, and I'm not uninformed about the sector.

I have been a group board governor at London South East Education Colleges for just over a year, but when I was first approached, though humbled, my initial reaction was to decline. If principals and their executive teams are serious about recruiting the untapped talent in their communities, they need to be aware of what keeps it away.

What's obvious to insiders isn't always obvious to outsiders. You might know that any and all experience is relevant, from running your own

business to helping with a local charity or club, or simply being an interested neighbour, but your interested neighbour may not know that.

“Is your college ‘recruiting a governor’, or offering an excellent training opportunity?”

And while we know that a governing body is there to challenge and provide a fresh perspective, for many, the idea of challenging an executive board can be intimidating. This is especially true of a sector reputed for its use of jargon.

Lastly, skilled and critical people are in high demand. Nobody wants to take up a position to make a bad job of it.

The truth is that a board of

governors is broadly equivalent to a board of directors or trustees in commercial or charitable organisations – an important role that provides the checks and balances to ensure good governance of the institution, including spending of public funds. To many, that's an unimaginable proposition.

Yet we need “critical friends” to push us forward and keep us grounded. To draw them in, we need to recognise these challenges and be the ones to tackle them. Fundamentally, they boil down to three questions: What could I possibly bring? What do I know about running a college? Will I have time?

To recruit the greatest range of voices then, executive teams should ensure they explicitly state that they welcome applications from anyone with an interest, they should do it in the clearest and most open terms possible, and they should offer training upfront. In fact, is your college “recruiting a governor”, or is

it really offering an excellent training opportunity to a lucky member of its community?

Time commitment may actually be the biggest barrier, and there really is little excuse not to set that out very clearly from the outset. And while every college hopes for a public-spirited volunteer who will give the role more than what is expected as a strict minimum, the truth is that people like this aren't born - they are made.

“People like this aren't born – they are made”

From my initial appointment, I have in the space of a year come to sit on two sub-committees. If I'd been asked to do that from the outset, my mind would probably have been made up to decline the role.

But I have grown quickly into it as I have received training and, importantly, started to feel part of a team. Other governors and our clerk to the board were fantastic at helping me to settle in too.

And it's not all about public-spiritedness. With my employer hat on, the role is an unparalleled opportunity to help steer the education of my future workforce. Employers are often quoted pointing out perceived failings of education. You are giving them the opportunity to do something about it. So don't be shy about telling potential recruits what they stand to gain.

Education, and especially further education, inspires passion in good people who are willing to devote every waking moment to. But it can't afford to stop at the college gate. Those who eat, sleep and breathe it need independent governors to remind them about the world they are preparing their students for, and recruiting them is a serious business.

MARK WRIGHT

National Head of Leadership and Governance, Education and Training Foundation



Time to get serious about developing governor capacity

As the role of college governor grows, the need for more support grows too. Help is already at hand, explains Mark Wright

The role of the governor has become hugely more challenging in the past few years. Colleges are growing in size and complexity, and financial pressures mean there is an increasing need for forensic scrutiny of leadership decisions. Effective governance is crucial to the success and sustainability of colleges, but is the sector at risk of asking too much of what remains by and large a voluntary role?

As the Government sets out what new funding is to be made available, including for capital investment, governors will be required to ensure the appropriate investment of public funds. These responsibilities, and a time commitment that increasingly resembles a part-time job, some may say, give credence to the argument that governors should be remunerated

for their efforts.

In fact, some chairs are already being paid. But while broadening this could help with recruiting and retaining governors, there is also a need to consider professionalising the role more broadly.

An essential part of that effort is to offer development opportunities, tailored to the demands of the job, that enable governors to steer their colleges successfully. The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) has been working with the sector to provide this support with a series of DfE-funded initiatives that form part of a drive to create a sector culture in which governor development is the norm.

In the Spring, we will be launching the Governor Development Programme following an extensive development stage during which many governors and clerks will have road-tested each of the 24 modules.

All colleges will be able to sign up to the programme on an annual

basis giving their governors access to modules that include online content, podcasts, and face-to-face delivery. Those who have tested it have valued the range and flexibility of the learning opportunities on offer. Governors are time-pressed people too, and being

“Effective governance is crucial to the success and sustainability of colleges”

able to listen to a podcast while getting on with other tasks was particularly appreciated.

The programme will be hosted on the ETF's Foundation Online Learning website, and governors will be able to develop their own personalised learning plans, working through the

most appropriate suite of modules for them in terms of content and level of difficulty – from those new to governance right up to experienced governors who need to ensure they stay up to date.

Professionalisation means a certain amount of ongoing management of governors' development needs. The work of mapping where governors are on their development journey could become the responsibility of the clerk or governance professionals, working in partnership with the chair and board members themselves to determine the development needs of individuals and of the team.

The programme complements the work that has already been done to boost the capacity of chairs of governors, in particular through the Chairs' Leadership Programme. According to Simon Perryman, Chair of Governors at Barnsley College, this programme provides “powerful

insights on the role of boards in setting strategy, maintaining oversight and managing reputation, as well as a valuable opportunity to work with other chairs on the real issues and challenges of the role”.

And our commitment to professionalising governance doesn't stop there. Efforts to develop a programme aimed specifically at the development of clerks is already underway in partnership with the DfE.

The ‘College of the Future’ has become a common topic of conversation across the sector, and rightly so. This decade will herald new challenges and also importantly new opportunities but some things are timeless. Effective leadership and governance is one of those things, and developing people – be they our students, our staff or our governors – is another. In the end, amongst a multitude of other things, we now need great governance to navigate our way safely to new horizons.

LAWRENCE
BARTONManaging director,
GB TrainingApprenticeship take-ups suffer
from pro-university data bias

The government's continued failure to deliver on its own apprenticeship take-up target is, in part, a symptom of its failure to properly inform school-leavers of the realities of higher education, warns Lawrence Barton

The government is failing to achieve its own targets for the take-up of apprenticeships. Meanwhile, the symbolic target of 50 per cent of people going to university was met at the start of this academic year, 20 years after first being announced by the Blair government. Aside from the contrast in political effort to meet these targets, the bias towards university is reinforced by poor information about the relative value of these alternative pathways. In essence, taxpayers and students alike are being misled.

While the number of apprenticeship starts has increased from 2017-18 to 2018-19, figures remain down on those preceding the introduction of the apprenticeship levy in May 2017. In 2018-

19, 19 per cent (75,100) of learners started at a higher level, compared to 13 per cent the year before. But despite this growth, the take-up of higher apprenticeships is relatively modest.

If we compare the recent trend for apprenticeship growth to that for higher education, a different picture emerges. Barring a dip following the introduction of the government's tuition fees reform, over the past ten years 18-year-old entry rates have consistently increased. In 2018, the 18-year-old entry rate stood at a record high of 33 per cent.

Yes, even the fanfare about the 50 per cent target is somewhat misleading. The DfE's figure counts people who are set to go to university up to the age of 30, not school-leaver entrants, as might be expected.

Contrasting perceptions of apprenticeships and university degrees are a significant driver behind the disparity in uptake. A large proportion of young people and their parents remain wedded to the idea that university is the

key to a prosperous future.

Policymakers often herald the "graduate premium". In 2017 university graduates earned on average £10,000 more than the average non-graduate. But this figure takes no account of the institution attended, the subject studied, the degree classification obtained, or the premium relative to other qualifications.

"Policymakers herald the 'graduate premium', but this figure is misleading"

It lumps the earnings of a Cambridge-educated particle physicist in with those of somebody with an honours degree in "drawing" from Falmouth University.

A 2014 independent analysis by the

Million Jobs campaign investigated these nuances between graduate and apprenticeship earnings. It estimated that over one-third of all graduates (39 per cent) enjoyed lifetime earnings below those of the average higher apprentice. While nearly half (46 per cent) of those from post-1992 universities earned less than higher apprentices.

For some "new" university courses, such as media studies, as many as three-quarters of graduates earned less than the average higher apprentice.

The study is not conclusive. It patches together data sets from different sources to produce its estimates. Nevertheless, it raises significant questions. The government and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) have taken steps to improve the granular detail in terms of graduate outcomes, but shortcomings make it difficult to determine trends from year to year and to compare these to those of apprentices.

There is also yet to be movement on

the publication of loan repayment rates by institution attended. Surely, both the prospective student and the taxpayer are owed a duty as to the likely outcome of their investment?

While attitudes towards apprenticeships are changing, there remains much work to be done. The lack of a coherent, detailed evidence-based case with which to go head-to-head with universities is hampering the industry's ability to challenge misconceptions. It is only when these misconceptions are addressed that we will begin to see the uptake of higher-level apprenticeships at the rate that is required for them to make a meaningful contribution to our economy.

The prime minister's chief adviser, Dominic Cummings, has recently outlined his own ambitions for a more informed, data-driven approach to government decision-making. Accurate and transparent information about the relative outcomes of further and higher education is an excellent place to start.

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Louise Turner

Director of inclusive provision
and SEND, Leeds City College

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Jo Simovic

Chief operating officer,
Umbrella Training

Start date January 2020



Anthony Bravo

Trustee,
VocTech Trust

Start date November 2019

Previous job
Director of academic support, Leeds City College

Interesting fact
She has climbed Mount Snowden

Previous job
Director of excellence, Umbrella Training

Interesting fact
She played handball for Olympia Handball Club London at
Champions League Level

Concurrent job
Principal, Basingstoke College of Technology

Interesting fact
He serves as a governor for Hampshire Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

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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

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

Difficulty:
Easy

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

Difficulty:
Medium

Solutions: See right

Spot the difference
To WIN an FE Week mug



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



Last Edition's winner: Callum Perry

Solutions

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

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

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