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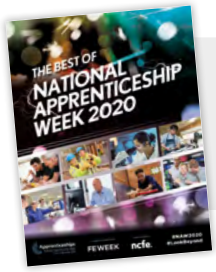
FE WEEK



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See pages 8 & 9

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Writing exclusively for *FE Week*, the education secretary promises to 'make sure the apprenticeship system works for the people that can benefit the most'

See page 18 of *FE Week* and page 3 of our National Apprenticeship Week 2020 supplement

Croydon College defends dash to subcontract £500,000 outside London just as ESFA reveals plans to overhaul rules

BILLY CAMDEN BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

See pages 4, 5 & 6

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News

'Weak decision-making' leads to two-thirds rise in colleges entering formal intervention

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The number of colleges entering formal intervention rose by two-thirds on the previous year, mostly due to historical "weak decision-making," according to the FE Commissioner's 2018/19 annual report.

In total, 13 colleges entered intervention – 12 for financial reasons and one which escalated from diagnostic assessment – five more than the previous year. None was the result of an 'inadequate' Ofsted grade.

However, the report states that 17 colleges moved out of intervention last year, meaning the overall number of colleges in FE Commissioner intervention has dropped from 27 in 2017/18 to 23 in 2018/19.

FE Commissioner Richard Atkins said intervention cases are "frequently" the result of "poor governance and leadership over a number of years, resulting in weak decision-making".

But he insisted that "we are making progress", adding that many of those moving out of intervention were "the most challenging cases – where the restructuring facility has resolved problems that were previously very entrenched".

The report only covers the period August 2018 to July 2019. Since then, a number of high-profile colleges have moved into formal intervention; these include Highbury, Gateshead, Richmond-upon-Thames and East Sussex College Group.

Following the end of the post-16 area reviews, Atkins' focus has shifted more towards diagnostic assessments: the commissioner's team conducted 33 diagnostic assessments in 2018/19, four more than in 2017/18.

These assessments include members of the FE Commissioner team visiting a college before major problems arise to "help strengthen improvement plans and then work with the college to ensure it is on the path to a strong and sustainable future".

The increases in interventions and assessments has been met by a rise in the number of national leaders of further education and national leaders of governance under his command.

It was announced last month that by recruiting leaders and governors from colleges such as London South East Colleges, Luminate Education Group, and Education Partnership North East the commissioner had almost doubled the number of principals and governors serving on the two teams.

One area where commissioner activity has decreased is structural reviews, which reduced from 20 to 13, with Atkins attributing it to the government's restructuring fund no longer being available.


Richard Atkins

The report also details how 74 per cent of eligible colleges had applied to the £15 million Strategic College Improvement Fund and 91 per cent of applicants have secured grants ranging from £60,000 to almost half a million pounds.

In his introduction to the 2018/19 report, Atkins said: "There is a much more positive perception of further education colleges today than was the case some time ago.

"The increases in funding announced in August 2019, together with the success of the 'Love our Colleges' campaign, have increased awareness of the sector and helped to create a more optimistic climate within institutions."

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News

ESFA launches fresh crackdown t

Radical rule changes to 'ensure public funds are properly spent'

BILLY CAMDEN
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Views are being sought by the Education and Skills Funding Agency on proposed changes to their subcontracting rules – as officials bid to cap deals and "eliminate" poor arrangements.

A consultation went live on Tuesday and responses to 10 recommendations will need to be submitted by March 17.

One key proposal is to strengthen controls on the volume and value of provision that can be subcontracted by a prime provider.

A percentage cap is proposed on subcontracted provision of 25 per cent of ESFA post-16 income in 2021/22, and further reducing that percentage to 17.5 per cent in 2022/23 and to 10 per cent in 2023/24.

The ESFA also wants to refer subcontractors to Ofsted for a direct inspection if their delivery exceeds £3 million.

Another key recommendation is to introduce "stronger criteria for subcontracted provision delivered at a distance".

The ESFA said that as a "broad rule of thumb", it believes that subcontracting partners should be no more than one hour away from the prime contractor by car.

Prior to entering into any distance arrangements, the agency proposes that providers "will be required to submit a case to ESFA for approval within a specified period, and must obtain the agreement of ESFA before delivery can commence".

And from 2021/22, the ESFA proposes to introduce stricter controls on the circumstances in which the whole of a learner's programme can be subcontracted.

Providers that wish to subcontract the whole of a learner's programme could be required to make a case to ESFA and obtain agreement to such arrangements before delivery can commence.

The ESFA's consultation said it is "particularly concerned" about the delivery of subcontracted sport related provision.

"Problems have arisen as there is generally also a sports club involved as a third party in the programme which may provide specialist coaching, and the boundaries between the funded education programme and the associated coaching activities become blurred," it stated.

The ESFA proposes to "make it a requirement that the lead provider must have a direct contractual arrangement with both the subcontractor and the sports club".

There would be no financial transactions between a subcontractor and the sports club – all financial arrangements would be directly with the lead provider.

In his weekly newsletter to members, Association of Employment and Learning Providers chief executive Mark Dawe said: "If the ESFA just funded all those actually doing the delivery, and shifted this year's subcontracting funding directly to the subcontractors in August 2020, the problem would be solved overnight."

He took particular issue with the agency's recommendations about distance learning: "There is reference to the subcontractor's location rather than the learner's location. This is written by someone who doesn't understand working with employers and communities where there are providers working across regions / the country with the employers and communities. Where the head office is located is totally irrelevant," Dawe said.

"An hour's car journey – really? Where do I start? Aren't we allowed to travel by train, doesn't sound very sustainable? What level of traffic do we have to assume? In London and other cities that could be a five-mile radius some days."

FE Week analysis of ESFA data shows that subcontracting accounted for £650 million in government funding for adults in 2018/19, and the practice fully or partially funded 25,230 students aged 16 to 19 at 587 subcontractors.

The agency has, however, not updated its list of declared subcontractors since November 5, 2018. It has also not published actual subcontracting fees and charges for all providers for 2017/18, as it promised to do.

Launching the consultation, Eileen Milner, the chief executive of the ESFA, said: "Where subcontracting is done well and for the right reasons, it can fill gaps in niche or expert provision, provide greater access to training facilities or offer an entry point for disadvantaged groups.

"However, as highlighted in my letter to the sector in October which announced ESFA's subcontracting review, despite tightening arrangements, there is still room to improve.

"We continue to receive information and investigate cases where subcontracted provision is not appropriately controlled, overseen or managed by the lead provider."

The ESFA plans to start implementing rule changes at the start of 2020-21.

o eliminate 'poor' subcontracting

This week the ESFA published 10 subcontracting proposals in a consultation document. The FE sector is encouraged to respond – and this should put an end to speculation of a complete subcontracting ban, says Peter Mucklow

PETER MUCKLOW

Director, Further Education, ESFA

Providers and the government need to better manage subcontracting

This week we published a consultation proposing reforms to the delivery of subcontracted further education provision. The proposal is calling on FE providers to give feedback on the proposed reforms by March17. This won't be a surprise to the sector. We have been very open about our intent to review subcontracting and we trailed our review, the reasons for it and that we would consult on it, in a personal letter from Eileen Milner to all providers receiving post-16 funds back in October 2019.

> "Current arrangements are not good enough"

I hope the consultation quells concerns about rumours of a complete ban on subcontracting. We know that subcontracting can enrich a learner's experience, be a necessity in some geographical locations, and – for some learner groups – be a gateway to participation. That said, current arrangements are not good enough. Some cases of subcontracting demonstrate poor planning, and too many show insufficient and inadequate oversight by those who have made the decision to subcontract provision. When this happens, unsatisfactory practice can creep in – with unacceptable consequences for both learners and the public purse.

We all want the FE and skills sector to be known for having a great reputation both nationally and internationally. As the organisation responsible for funding, it is important that we consistently review, challenge and be willing to change our practice – to make things better, and to offer the very best value for money both to our learners and to taxpayers. This review is broad in scope, and because of its breadth and depth, we know some of these changes may take a period of years, rather than months, to fully implement. But it is important and timely to start the journey and see it through.

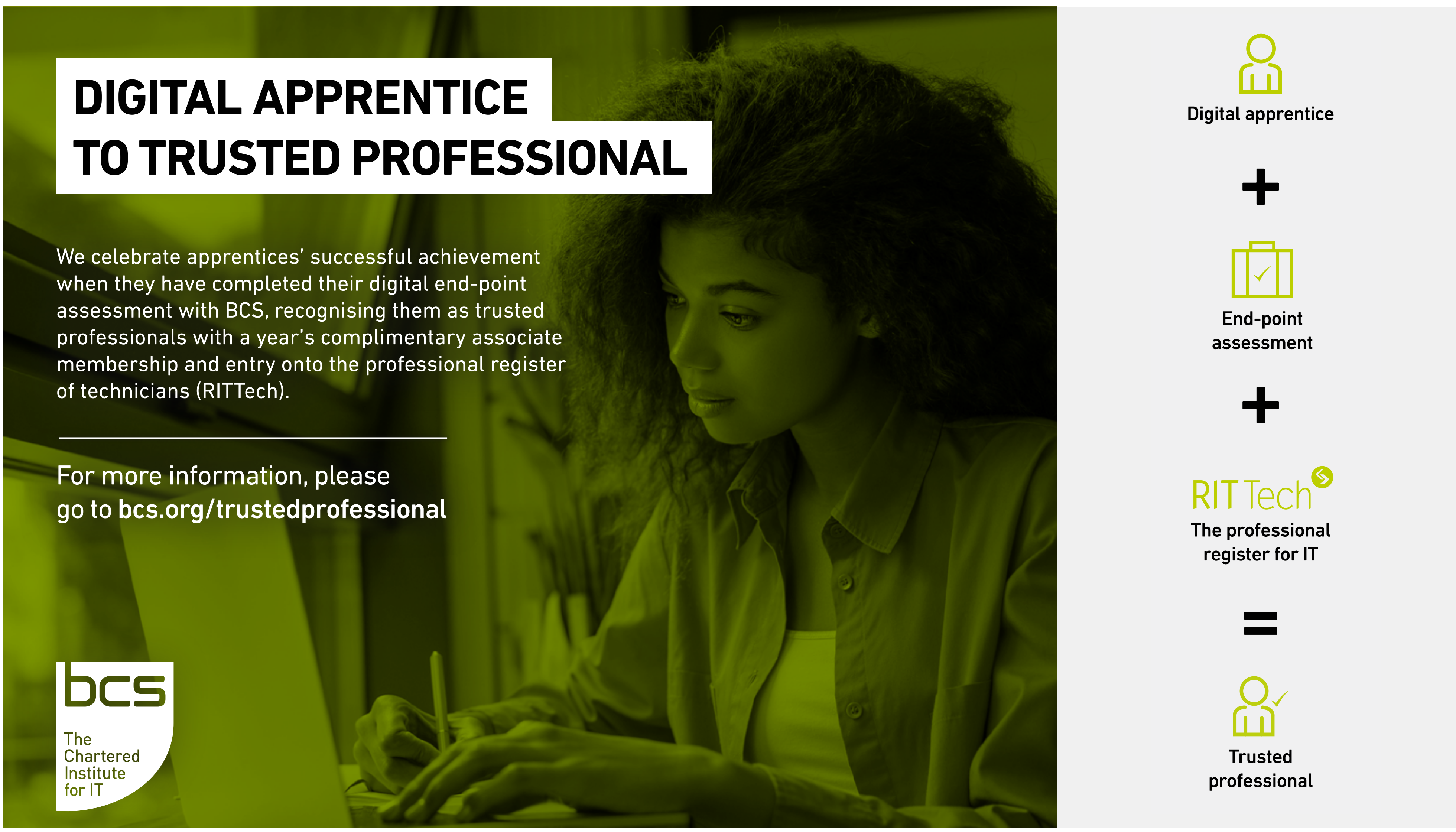
The improvement in oversight of subcontracting is not just looking at what providers can do. We know there are things the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) need to do better, which is why we are looking at how we can be more transparent in the requirements we set out, and how we use data more effectively to address concerns earlier. However, lead providers are ultimately responsible for the subcontracting agreements

> "We need to make changes that make a positive difference"

they enter into – and they must improve their oversight of subcontracted provision. Learners on subcontracted provision are enrolled with lead providers – and they have every right to expect their provision to be managed as if it were directly controlled by the provider themselves.

We must be satisfied that we are managing public money properly, so we need to make changes that make a positive difference. But we must do it in a fair way – a way that respects the fact that providers may need some time to implement certain aspects of the reforms. We can only do this if organisations and networks talk and engage in the debate.

That is why we are asking those in the FE sector to tell us what they think about the proposed changes by March 17 – thus helping us make meaningful change and improvement to subcontracting.



News

Alarm bells sound over college's £500K last minute subcontracting

BILLY CAMDEN
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From front

Exclusive

A college has put £500,000 out to tender in an attempt to achieve funding targets before August – despite rules that ban subcontracting to meet "short-term funding objectives".

One provider membership organisation said the case has set "alarm bells ringing", but the Education and Skills Funding Agency has refused to say whether it will take action over what appears to be a clear breach of funding rules.

According to a tender published on the government's contracts finder website last month, Croydon College is after subcontractors to deliver half of its total ESFA adult education budget funding for five months.

The contract, worth £475,000, will run from February 28 to July 31 with "no scope to carry forward any funding to 2020/21". Bids must be submitted by February 10.

The college, which will charge a 20 per cent management fee, also does not specify what type of provision it is looking for the subcontractor to deliver. It says only that the "delivery target group" is adults who live in non-devolved funding areas of England and within a 50-mile radius of the college's main site.

This, together with the short duration and last minute nature of the tender, suggests it is a tactical move to use up unspent moneys from the adult education budget.

Funding rules state that providers "must not subcontract for delivery to meet short-term funding objectives" and an ESFA spokesperson said they should have "clear curriculum plans for the delivery of their subcontracted provision".

> "Fund all subcontractors directly and ensure that all the money reaches the learner"

The college, which is led by principal Caireen Mitchell (pictured on front), did not deny that it was embarking on tactical subcontracting, but blamed the move on "unintended consequences of devolution on access to education and training for our local community" (see box out for full response).

The Greater London Authority took control of the AEB for providers in the capital in August 2019.

Croydon College received £3,350,056 from the GLA to deliver the provision in the capital this academic year, but also received a direct ESFA contract worth £936,000 for delivery of the provision outside London.

The college claims to have used up all of its GLA funding for the AEB, and has even requested more of it for this academic year. It is the out-of-area funding that the college is struggling to use up.

However, the college, which has a history of "distance learning" through subcontracting, would have known about its ESFA allocation since around this time last year. It refused to comment on why the procurement was so last minute.

Association of Employment and Learning Providers boss Mark Dawe told *FE Week* that as "soon as this tender appeared alarm bells were ringing".

He said it is "finally time" for the government to "reallocate the tens of millions of grant money directly to those who do the work".

"Let's stop avoiding the elephant in the room and from August 2020 fund all subcontractors directly and ensure that all the money reaches the learner rather than brokers and spurious management fees," Dawe added.

It comes amid a fresh crackdown on subcontracting by the government.

A consultation on radical rule changes was launched this week (see page 4). It states that "entering into subcontracting arrangements for financial gain" would not be acceptable.

ESFA chief executive Eileen Milner sent a sector-wide letter on October 3 which said: "I am asking that you review your current subcontracting activity and satisfy yourself that it is purposeful, appropriate, and provides added value to learners. We must be confident that you are managing and overseeing it in line with our requirements."

It went on to warn: "I want to make it clear that where poor subcontracting practice is evident to us we will act decisively."

The ESFA said Croydon College had responded to Milner's letter to state that they were complying with the rules.

The Department for Education told *FE Week* that it will take action against providers who are not compliant with funding rules, but stopped short of commenting directly on the college's case.

> "All providers should have clear curriculum plans for the delivery of their subcontracted provision"

A spokesperson said: "We expect any college making subcontracting decisions to be able to evidence that the subcontracting is primarily for the benefit of students.

"All providers should have clear curriculum plans for the delivery of their subcontracted provision and these should fit with their overall curriculum strategy – we would expect to see this feature in their declarations to us. If there is a significant deviation from their declaration we would explore the reasons for that with the college."

Croydon College's response in full

"In January 2020 Croydon College commenced a procurement exercise for delivery of up to £475,000 of activity to learners who are not resident in any of the devolved areas of adult education budget funding within a 50-mile radius of the college.

The devolution of the AEB from 1 August 2019 used geographical delivery from the 2017/18 academic year as a basis for funding allocations. In the 2017/18 academic year, prior to the arrival of the new executive team at Croydon College, approximately 25 per cent of the AEB to the college was subcontracted.

In the 2018/19 academic year under the new leadership a key priority for the college was educating and training our community in Croydon where there is clear levels of demand and need. We were very successful in delivering this priority with an extra c£600,000 of education and training provided to our local community in Croydon. It is greatly disappointing to us that this change in delivery pattern has not been recognised in our 2019/20 GLA allocation, as the methodology for deciding the level of devolved allocation to the College was based on the 2017/18 academic year.

The college has written to the ESFA, the GLA, Croydon Council and its MP about the unintended consequences of devolution on access to education and training for our local community. In order to try and deliver the volume of education and training that we were able to for our local, close community the college has applied for and will hear at the end of February whether it has been successful in its bid for increased GLA funding for 2019/20 (maximum 10 per cent).

The college has commenced its own provision of distance learning and short courses during 2019/20 in order to deliver its non-GLA grant and is working hard to develop our capacity in nearby areas of Surrey, Sussex and Kent alongside high quality partners. This will be used to support our apprenticeship delivery. The college expects to be in a position meet the full level of our non-devolved GLA funding directly in future years once it has built its own capacity."

DfE launches £95m capital fund for wave two T-level providers

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The Department for Education is stumping up an extra £95 million to help upgrade the facilities of the 64 colleges set to deliver T-levels from 2021.

It is in addition to the £38 million capital fund being used for the first 50 providers that will offer the new technical qualifications from this September.

The latest fund will again be delivered in two parts. From today, 2021 providers are being invited to bid to refurbish their existing buildings or to build new spaces.

Funding for specialist equipment such as digital and audio-visual kit will account for around 20 per cent of the £95 million and will be allocated to providers from spring 2021 onwards.

As revealed by *FE Week* in October, colleges will have to keep on running T-levels for at least 20 years if they want to avoid handing back the millions they will receive in capital funding.

Education secretary Gavin Williamson has also today announced an extra £15 million to expand the T-level professional development programme.

The DfE said the scheme, which is being delivered by the Education and Training Foundation, aims to provide tailored training to boost FE lecturers' and leaders' "skills, industry knowledge and expertise".

The first phase of this began in spring 2019 and will continue until March 2020. A spokesperson for the DfE said as of December 2019, the professional development programme supported over 2,500 individuals.

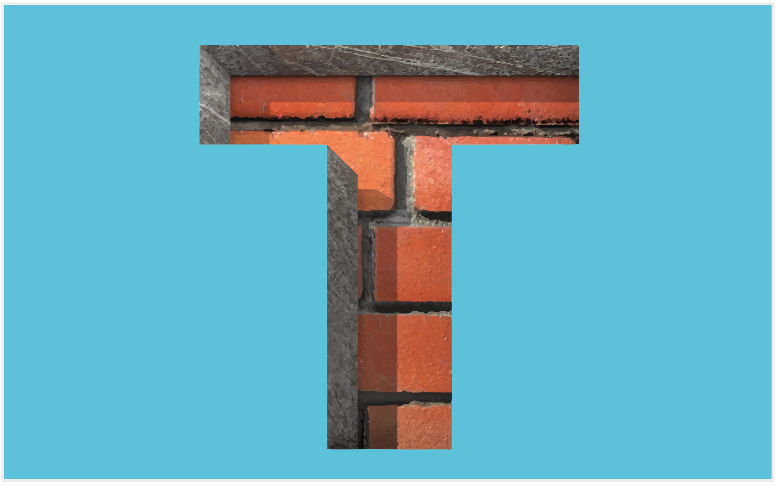
Announcing the new cash today, Williamson said: "T-levels will play a vital role in our drive to unlock talent and level up skills across the country.

"This cash injection will make sure more T-level providers and their staff are ready to teach the new qualifications, so young people have access to the high-quality teaching, first class facilities and industry standard equipment they need to succeed."

David Russell, chief executive of the Education and Training Foundation, added: "It is crucial that professionals teaching the new qualifications are excellently equipped to do so from the very first day learners walk through the doors."

And John Laramy, principal of Exeter College, which will deliver T-levels from 2020, said the success of the qualifications is "fundamentally linked to the quality of staff who teach, assess and lead the provision".

The first 11 colleges to receive a share of the original £38 million capital fund were named in July. They included Barnsley College, which received £2.25 million, and Exeter College, which received £2.5 million.



Since then, 11 more colleges in wave one of the rollout have had grants from the fund confirmed, according to a DfE spokesperson, and their names will be revealed in "due course".

The first three T-levels set for delivery in September 2020 include childcare and education, construction and digital.

Another route, in health and science, will be introduced from 2021.

The DfE spokesperson said that 2020 providers are able to apply for a part of the new £95 million capital fund if they are delivering the health and science route from 2021.

The names of the 64 colleges chosen to deliver T-levels in the second wave of their roll out were announced in June.

Khan criticised as being 'wasteful' for £40k splurge on AEB connsultant

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London's mayor is planning to spend up to £40,000 of the capital's adult education budget on hiring a consultant to review a consultation – despite employing more than 50 staff to manage the policy.

The move has been slammed as "wasteful", with one college principal labelling it as "just wrong".

Newly published agenda papers for the Skills for Londoners Board meeting, scheduled for February 11, show that officials are preparing to launch a third 'Skills for Londoners Framework Consultation' this month.

The document notes that an outside firm would be used to summarise consultation responses at a cost "up to £40,000" which would be "contained within the overall AEB budget 2020/21".

Officials advise board members, made up of London borough councillors and FE sector representatives, that without the extra help a "significant amount of officer time will be required to analyse the responses to the framework consultation".

Sadiq Khan

A Greater London Authority (GLA) spokesperson told *FE Week* there are 52.5 full-time staff directly working on the AEB for the current financial year, some of whom also work on European Social Fund projects.

To mitigate this "risk", the agenda papers said that a consultancy would be commissioned to carry out the analysis and produce a summary report, which is scheduled to be published by November 2020.

Officials claimed this would "ensure sufficient resource is available to carry out additional public engagement and to model the feasibility, impact and cost of any potential changes to the AEB for 2021/22, which will need to be finalised by summer 2020".

A London college principal who wanted to remain anonymous told *FE Week* it was "a massive inefficiency when every penny counts – and is just wrong".

And Tony Allen, a former director at the Skills Funding Agency, said it was "an inevitable, completely wasteful, by-product of devolution".

FE Week previously reported that London mayor Sadiq Khan was having to hire a huge team of new bureaucrats to manage the GLA's devolved AEB, which totals more than £300 million annually.

In 2018 he warned that his team of administrators, whose wages are paid for by top-slicing around £3 million from the AEB every year, may not be enough to handle the budget.

London college bosses previously blasted the unintended consequences of devolution, as it siphons funding from frontline learning.

The GLA, along with six other mayoral combined authorities (MCAs), had their area's share of the AEB devolved to them on August 1, 2019.

FE Week asked the six MCAs if they use their AEB to pay for consultants in the same way the GLA is planning to, but none responded before publication.

The GLA's consultation will run for four weeks and will be carried out using an online survey.

News

College leaders brand use o

NICK LINFORD
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Exclusive

The government has come under fire from successful college leaders after a series of *FE Week* freedom of information requests revealed exactly how £111 million of bailout funding has been spent.

Four colleges struck secretive Fresh Start deals with the government, the largest of which was for £54 million at Hull College Group.

> "In what ways can such large bailouts and infrastructure support, be justified to some colleges but not others?"

Each deal, agreed by the ESFA Transaction Unit and funded from a Treasury 'restructuring fund', included millions to write-off bank and government loans.

Hull College for example, received close to £2.5 million to write off bank loans and a further £24 million to write off the government loan, known as exceptional financial support.

Mike Hopkins, principal at South and City College Birmingham, described the debt-write offs for "failing colleges" as "incredible".

And we now know the deals also included huge sums of capital funding, for building upgrades as well as IT hardware and software.

In the case of Cornwall College, of the £30 million bailout, close to £7 million has been spent on capital, including IT hardware and software.

Chris Todd, chartered accountant and principal of Derwentside College, described the sums as "staggering" and "handing out almost £4 million to fund IT upgrades and paying off debts of over £20 million does not strike me as a good, or appropriate use of public funds".

"I know we need to protect the students during a recovery, but when are we going to stand up as a sector and challenge this?" he added.

And a third principal that did not want to be named said: "While I support intervention and financial support to ensure students are looked after, it does seem extraordinary that in a climate where no college has enough money a failing college is made debt free, given millions for IT and money for capital.

"I knew it was a big figure, but this goes way beyond a bailout."

A Department for Education summary of restructuring fund spend shows in total close to £450 million had been spent on bailouts by the end of the last academic year and ESFA accounts reveal more than £100 million in loans have also been written-off.

The DfE has defended the use of public funds for bailouts, with a spokesperson telling *FE Week*: "Restructuring facility funding was provided where there was no alternative.

"In cases where the level of debt was assessed as unsustainable, debt was replaced with restructuring facility funding.

"Where the future sustainability of a college has been affected by the postponement of investment in the estate, this funding was provided for essential works, including IT upgrades."

But it seems the ESFA deals were not so sweet for successful colleges encouraged to merge.

Hopkins said: "It is well known that we were underfunded as the first college through the area review

merger process. As a consequence our debt levels, that we were required to begin the merger with, are significantly in excess of the maximums deemed appropriate in the sector and well in excess of the banks requirements.

> "Others of us are running very tightly managed ships, making compromises"

"This has meant that we are unable to get bank support and has inhibited our investment, despite being a good college. We have been told that despite the original deal being wrong, as accepted by the ESFA, they cannot pay off the £5 million loan we were required to take. Therefore I find it incredible that millions can be found to pay-off the debts for failing colleges."

And in the case of Hadlow College Group, where debts are still being added up and likely to reach close to £100 million, the government pulled the plug and called in an education administrator for the first and so far only time.

Several other leaders at successful colleges shared their reactions anonymously.

One college principal told *FE Week*: "I can't see how such levels of support are offered to some but not others can ever be fair. In what ways can such large bailouts and infrastructure support, be justified to some colleges but not others?"

Another said: "I think in fairness terms it would be good to know how many other deals got this kind of investment. I suppose where it stings is that others of us are running very tightly managed ships, making compromises and costs cuts because of funding constraints and yet learners in Cornwall will be better served as a result of the failure – that's the bit that doesn't sit right in terms of public purse."

> "Restructuring facility funding was provided where there was no alternative."

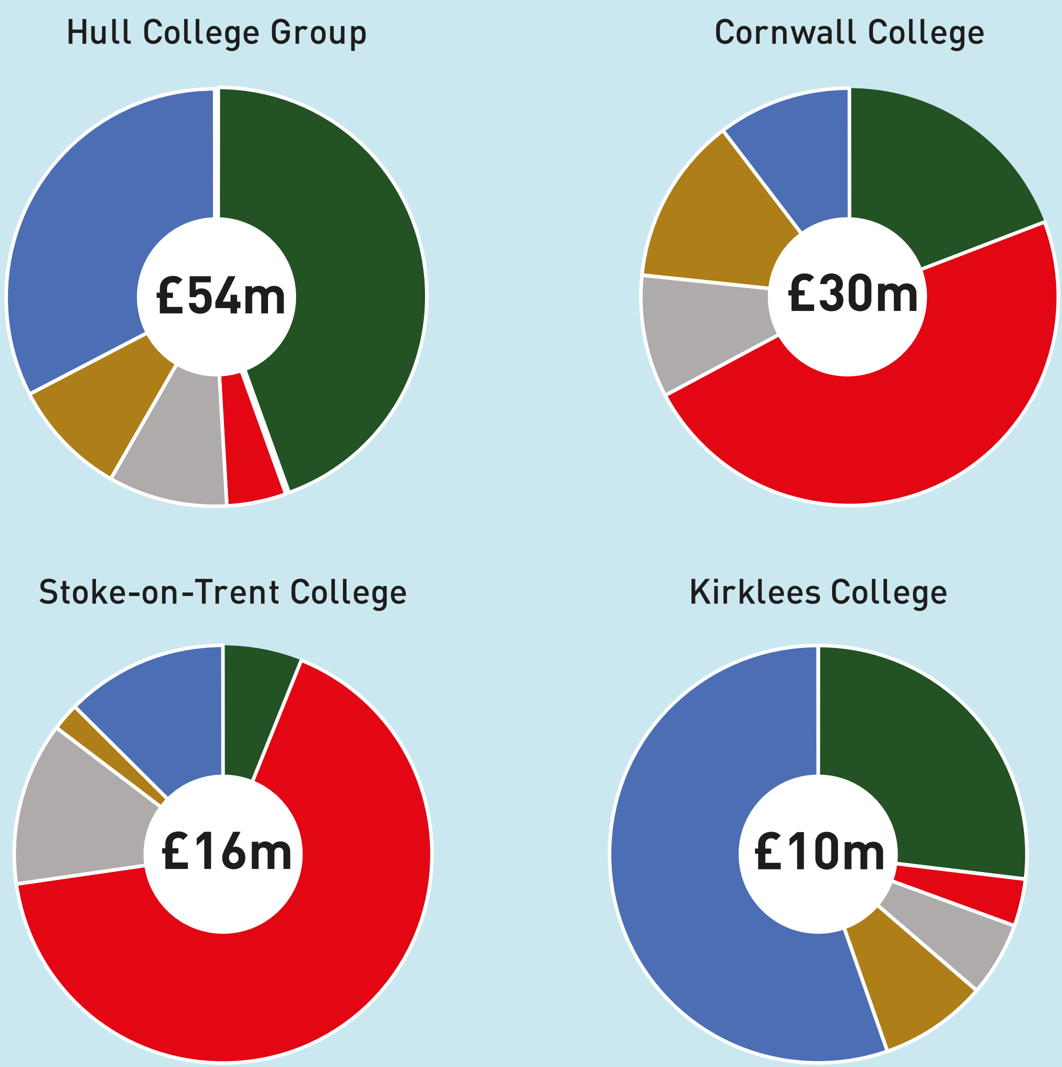
Todd concluded that "we need a system that stops this from happening in the first place, and that rewards the best colleges."

> " I find it incredible that millions can be found to pay-off the debts for failing colleges."

Mike Hopkins, principal at South and City College Birmingham

f bailout funds 'staggering'

'Fresh Start' funding and debt-write off deals agreed by EFSA and funded from the Treasury



Example Fresh Start budget at Hull College approved by ESFA Transaction Unit

£941,468 on network

£160,822 on Virtual Learning Environment

£120,860 on new Firewall

£390,551 on Smart TV's

£704,547 on computers

£93,638 on self service lockers

£197,593 on student record system

£630,955 on student record system consultants

£502,922 on systems

£147,434 on system consultants

£213,000 on process consultants

Fresh Start colleges	DfE loan write-off	Bank loan restucturing or write-off	Cash for capital and building works	Cash for IT and systems	Other (incl. staff restructuring and working capital)	Total Restructuring Fund
Hull College Group	£24,026,725	£2,480,579	£4,974,545	£4,894,485	£17,623,666	**£54,000,000**
Cornwall College	£5,820,000	£14,592,495	£2,879,329	£3,948,086	£3,144,090	**£30,384,000**
Stoke-on-Trent College	£1,000,000	£10,905,202	£2,066,756	£350,000	£2,052,042	**£16,374,000**
Kirklees College	£2,800,000	£380,963	£597,000	£866,590	£5,760,382*	**£10,400,000**

*Includes £3.8m government loan
Source: Figures supplied by colleges as part of a Freedom of Information Request

"I know we need to protect the students during a recovery, but when are we going to stand up as a sector and challenge this?"

Chris Todd, chartered accountant and principal of Derwentside College

News

Union to sue construction firms for deducting levy from wages

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"Thousands" of workers have been forced to pay the apprenticeship levy from their wages thanks to a loophole in government rules, according to a union.

Unite claims it has received "increasing" evidence that some employment agencies, umbrella companies and other "unscrupulous operators" are "corrupting" the policy in this way.

They say the construction industry is the main culprit – and the union is now taking legal action against the companies involved.

Since April 2017, companies with a pay bill of more than £3 million have had to pay an apprenticeship levy to the government, equating to 0.5 per cent of their payrolls.

Wage deductions found by Unite often amount to less than £2 a week per employee – but rules state companies cannot deduct the levy from the wages of an earner.

The union would not reveal the names of these "unscrupulous" employers, or how many they have found to be deploying the practice.

The union's assistant general secretary Gail Cartmail said: "The levy is entirely clear that it is the duty of the employer to pay it. The fact that it is being passed on to workers is entirely unacceptable and taints the entire system."

She called on the government "to step in and ensure that no employer can pass the levy onto its workforce.

"If it fails to do so, then the general public will consider it a punitive tax on workers, and the good intentions behind the apprentice levy will be entirely undermined."

Unite, which has warned about the practice since 2018, said that although it is "highly immoral" to pass levy costs on to workers, it is not illegal – provided the worker has agreed to the deduction.

A spokesperson said construction workers are usually compelled into operating via an umbrella or payroll company, and in order to obtain work they "don't get an option how they are paid".

Payslips are "then made so complicated that workers frequently struggle to understand what deductions are being made from their pay".

And even if they are aware of the charge, most sign up in order not to lose the work they have been offered.

Unite added that there is a "double whammy" if an agency or umbrella company charges their entire workforce the apprentice levy because they will be making an additional profit, as they don't pay the levy on their first £3 million of payroll.

Mark Dawe, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, said: "It's really disturbing to hear that this is still going on.

"Employers are under contractual obligations with the ESFA to draw down the levy in the intended way,

with no requirement on the part of the apprentice to make a financial contribution and the government needs to crack down on any malpractice once and for all."

It is not just construction companies that appear to be making their employees pay the levy for them. In 2017, *FE Week*'s sister paper *Schools Week* found that pay slips for supply teachers from umbrella company RACs Group included a percentage deduction attributed to the "apprenticeship levy".

The group claimed at the time it was following the law and deducted the levy costs as a "business overhead" from the income it earns through agencies that send out supply teachers, rather than employee's earnings.

An HMRC spokesperson said: "Employers cannot deduct the apprenticeship levy from the gross salary of their employees.

"However, an umbrella company can deduct amounts to cover its administration and other costs, including the apprenticeship levy, from their overall rates."

ESFA to demand staff and pay data from all directly-funded providers

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The government is to force all colleges and training providers to submit workforce and pay data to "ensure" they can "benchmark themselves against one another".

Following a consultation last year, which attracted 40 responses, the Department for Education this week said the ESFA will gather workforce records for 2020/21, before making compliance mandatory for 2021/22.

Sanctions will be imposed if providers fail to submit the data. According to the DfE, these could include a letter from ministers and being publicly named and shamed.

The new data collection will involve the thousands of FE providers in receipt of ESFA funding. Minister Michelle Donelan claimed it will "ensure transparency of workforce data and will seek to ensure that providers can benchmark themselves against one another".

Thousands of subcontractors will not, however, be involved in the collection for 2020/21 as "data from subcontractors with multi-provider contracts could cause confusion" – so the results would still show a very partial picture.

Data likely to be collected includes staff pay, age, gender, what qualifications they hold, and their contract type.

And it will encompass the whole workforce such as back office support staff, not just lecturers.

Association of Employment and Learning Providers boss Mark Dawe said: "Until we see the detail of what is being collected, it's very hard to comment.

"But the last thing the sector needs is more bureaucratic burden, so the new system should be designed to limit the administrative impact on all providers."

The Education and Training Foundation already conducts an annual FE workforce survey, but it is not mandatory and does not usually attract a high number of responses.

Its latest survey, for 2017/18, reflected 90,792 records submitted by just 193 providers, of which 118 were colleges.

University and College Union head of further education Andrew Harden said the optional approach to workforce data collection has "failed and we welcome this move to compulsory collection.

"Good quality data is essential if are to paint an accurate picture of how staff are being treated by employers across the sector."

In her ministerial foreword to the department's consultation response, Donelan said FE providers "make a real difference to the prospects of learners and local communities" and to support them with policy intervention, government "needs an evidence base that is comprehensive and complete".

"We will not be designing an FE workforce data collection from scratch," she added.

"We will draw lessons from practice in existing collections. These changes will give FE workforce data the same status as that of schools and higher education, where we have near full coverage across our workforce datasets."

The single DfE-led data collection will "sit alongside and complement the other collections that the ESFA is responsible for, such as submissions of learner data, and the functionality will be co-designed with the sector to offer coherence to those inputting data".

The consultation said officials recognise that collecting information on the entire FE workforce from all providers is a "complex ask", so it will lead an "extensive programme of user testing with the sector in the lead up to launch, to make sure the collection avoids duplication".

It added: "We will continue to consider how this approach might be applied to the same providers that are funded by Mayoral Combined Authorities or the Greater London Authority and do not also receive funding from the ESFA".

The timing of the collection period has not yet been decided, however. The consultation said there was "no clear consensus" on this, so the ESFA will "consult further".

Ofqual research finds colleges put learners' needs before funding

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Learners are "at the heart" of schools', colleges' and training providers' decisions about the qualifications they offer, according to new research by Ofqual.

The finding comes just weeks after Ofsted chief inspector Amanda Spielman reiterated her concern that some colleges fill their rolls with "superficially attractive" low-level arts and media courses simply to "attract funding".

Her comments were based on a report from November 2018 – rather than inspection reports – the findings of which were from 15 college visits and learner surveys. It found that "the proportion of [level 2] students who went on to employment was small".

Ofqual's research found that there is "little data available about what drives schools, colleges and training providers to choose certain qualifications over others" for their 16- to 19-year-old students.

The exams regulator commissioned YouGov to conduct a survey of over 500 staff which found there are a range of factors that affect which qualifications to offer, which can be categorised as: "students' needs; the capacity or facilities of the educational establishment itself; and the needs of employers".

More than nine in ten respondents said they offered qualifications based on "learner interest", and 83 per cent said their decisions were due to the qualifications "serving as prerequisites for further study".

Funding was the least likely driver for why providers choose to offer the qualifications they do.

"The research indicates meeting students' needs and serving their interests – either directly, or by enhancing their prospects and future employability – is a common priority across educational settings," the report said.

"This shared commitment to students may prompt centres to continue offering courses, even where they are not commercially viable."

Ofqual found that the weight different types of educational providers give to other factors "varies".

Employer-focused drivers were, for example, were "more a point of focus" for colleges and training-providers than schools.

It adds, however, that even though funding and fees were "found to be of little importance across the survey as a whole", it "appears to be a more frequent driver of choice" in training providers and colleges.

Phil Beach, Ofqual's executive director for vocational and technical qualifications, said: "It is encouraging to have for the first time research evidence showing learners are at the heart of schools', colleges' and training providers' decisions about the qualifications they offer.

"It is important these decisions are the right choices for learners, supporting their development and employability – factors we will consider as we progress our research in this area.

"When making such decisions, both learners and centres need access to detailed information about the range of regulated qualifications available and their value to employers."

Spielman, who is a former chair of Ofqual, was criticised by the college sector following her claim that a minority of colleges simply try to "fill their rolls and attract funding" with low-level arts and media courses.

Writing for *FE Week* shortly after those comments were made, Association of College's boss David Hughes said singling out courses at lower levels was "wrong and unfair".

Responding to Ofqual's report, he said: "This research confirms what I already knew – that colleges continue to serve students' interests and help prepare them for the world of work with the wide range of courses they offer and the transferable skills they provide.

"Student choices are informed in many different ways, not just immediate job progression opportunities, although that is one important component."

News

Troubled college to tumble two Ofsted grades from 'outstanding'

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Exclusive

A college that is currently investigating an unexpected £6 million deficit is set to be downgraded by Ofsted from 'outstanding' to 'requires improvement'.

It is the latest blow to Gateshead College, which has also seen its high-profile principal and chair quit in recent weeks.

The college announced to staff last Friday that it received a preliminary grade three after a visit from the education watchdog in late January.

A spokesperson said they were unable to comment on Ofsted's verdict until the findings are made official and its report has been published.

Judith Doyle

FE Week understands that management and leadership was the key area that brought the college's rating down. Staff are understood to be angry, as they believe the overall grade is not a fair reflection of student performance or teaching provision.

Ofsted was drafted into Gateshead, which was given a grade one in 2015, after the college discovered a shock £6 million shortfall in September – just weeks after its finance director went on sick leave.

FE Week understands the results of an external forensic investigation into the cause of its current financial position was scheduled to be presented to the executive at the college this week.

Gateshead received a financial notice to improve from the Education and Skills Funding Agency last month after it had "been assessed as experiencing serious cash flow pressures". The college is now in formal intervention.

The independent audit into the deficit had been commissioned by the college's ex-chair, John McCabe.

He resigned last month, after just six months in the role, "following discussions with the FE Commissioner about what the college needed right now".

The former highest-paid principal in the country, Judith Doyle, also retired from Gateshead with immediate effect on December 31.

A spokesperson for the college said the decision to bring forward her intention to retire was "hers, in the belief that it was in the college's best interests [for her] to step aside now, enabling the new three-year plan to be delivered by the team with the support of the ESFA and FE Commissioner".

Doyle was the highest-paid principal in the country in 2017/18, when she received a salary of between £340,001 and £350,000.

The college's financial statement for the year ended July 31, 2018 also showed six other key management staff were paid between £110,001 and £190,000.

Former deputy FE commissioner

John Hogg was drafted in as the new chair while deputy principal Chris Toon took over as acting principal.

Toon announced a redundancy consultation was underway in January, with 26 jobs at risk – to help "address some short-term financial pressures the college is facing at the moment".

He said the job losses would mainly be within business support areas, adding that a voluntary severance scheme had been opened "to mitigate as far as possible the number of compulsory redundancies".

The college previously told *FE Week* a "highly experienced interim financial director" was appointed before Christmas, and that it was considering "options for short-term funding loans".

It was also confirmed that a new three-year financial plan is hoped to return Gateshead College to surplus by 2020-2021.

It recorded a surplus of £748,000 in 2017-18, according to its latest accounts.

The financial objectives for 2018/19 had included achieving a surplus of £535,000 and continuing to improve the college's financial health score to reach 'outstanding'.

£24m recruitment support package

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Over 500 people working in technical roles are to be enticed into training to be further education lecturers as part of a £24 million support package.

The Department for Education has fleshed out the details of the investment, which was initially mentioned in August 2019, when chancellor Sajid Javid announced a £400 million boost for the sector.

Education secretary Gavin Williamson has said ambitions to achieve a world-beating technical education system "can only be achieved if we have outstanding teachers who will inspire the next generation".

Included in the funding is £10 million to support up to 550 more people to train as lecturers in a range of technical subjects as part of the Taking Teaching Further programme.

Delivered by the Education & Training Foundation and first launched in 2018, the scheme has so far supported around 100 people to work in FE.

Taking Teaching Further is aimed at supporting recruitment to priority sectors ahead of the introduction of T-levels later this year. These sectors include education and childcare, digital, and construction, as well as engineering, manufacturing and other STEM subjects.

David Russell, chief executive of the ETF, said: "I encourage all colleges and FE providers to register and apply to take part in this important programme."

The £24 million also includes £11 million to provide bursaries and grants worth up to £26,000 to attract people to train as FE lecturers.

Eligible shortage subjects include maths, sciences, engineering, manufacturing, computing and English, with funding also available for teachers training to teach learners with special educational needs and

disabilities in 2020-21.

There will also be a £3 million mentor training programmes, delivered by the ETF to FE lectures in the early years of their career.

Williamson has used the opportunity to pay tribute to the FE lecturers doing "fantastic jobs and changing lives", while saying the investment is a "clear signal" of the government's commitment to helping the sector recruit and retain staff.

News of the funding boost has been welcomed by sector organisations, with the deputy chief executive of the Association of Colleges Kirsti Lord saying they are "delighted" with the new investment, as "supporting FE providers to recruit and retain the best possible teachers must be a top priority for the government".

"We believe this marks an important step in giving FE teaching the recognition and support it rightly deserves," she added.

College principals have previously spoken with *FE Week* about their struggles with recruiting lecturers in specialist subjects, with one saying they are often "constrained by affordability".

In addition, the Augar Review, published last May, recommended that investment in the FE workforce should be a "priority" and stated that there ought to be clear progression routes and development opportunities put together by the Association of Colleges and government.

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STEP 3

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News

Government research finds policy makers contributed to National College failures

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The government's own researchers have slammed policy-makers for exacerbating National Colleges failures, according to an evaluation report into how the same mistakes can be avoided with Institutes of Technology.

In the 107-page evaluation report – published yesterday – the Department for Education was criticised for setting up specialist National Colleges as stand-alone institutions that relied on working capital loans and employer investment to fund initial operating costs.

"Learner numbers will be too low to achieve a broad base and achieve financial sustainability"

It says: "An inherent risk with a specialist institution is that the scope is so narrow that learner numbers will be too low to achieve a broad base and achieve financial sustainability."

The report adds: "More detailed consideration could have been given to other models such as evolving new institutions from existing education and training providers" and "if more time had been invested early on to analyse the potential impact of existing policies and involve relevant stakeholders in finding solutions, it is likely there would have been fewer challenges."

Only one of the four national colleges – launched two years ago with £80 million of public money – was developed at existing providers: National College for Nuclear (NCfN). The report found that it faced "fewer challenges" than the others as it is based across two hubs at Bridgwater and Taunton College in Somerset and Lakes College in Cumbria.

Rather than have to rely on a loan, the two existing colleges were able to offer a lot of the wider infrastructure required for setting up a new provider – such as business development and marketing, and coverage for some of the college's overhead costs.

The report compares this favourably to the planned set-up of IoTs, which will be run by high-performing FE and HE providers.

It also says that National Colleges have struggled to recruit high-quality staff as they are "difficult to obtain in buoyant or specialist sectors of the UK economy where salary expectations are high".

Senior members of the teaching faculty who had come over from industry reported they had taken pay cuts in order to work for their college, with one likening it to "national service".

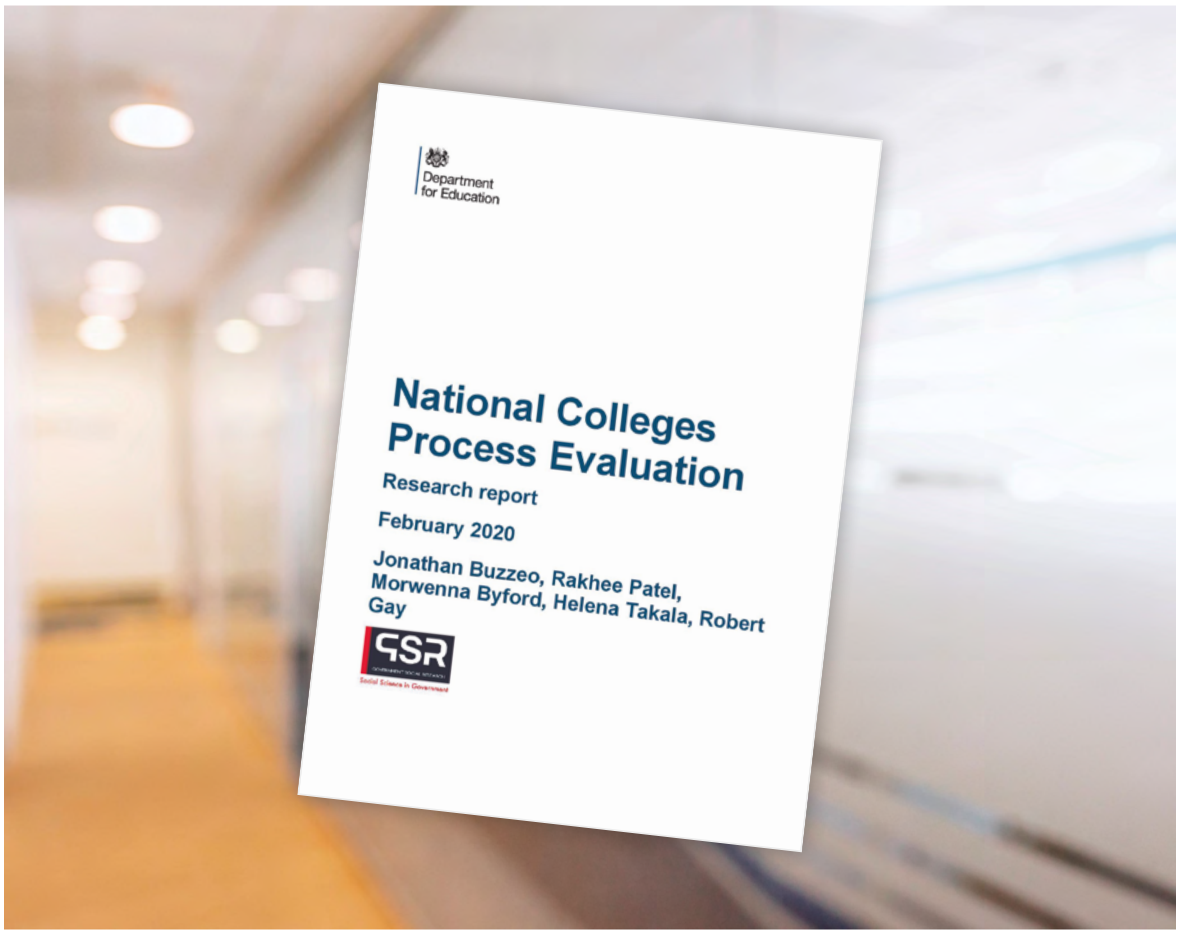
The report also claims that paying ESFA funding in arrears (after the first two years of delivery) has created difficulties when the colleges try to recruit staff to design and deliver new courses and increase the scale of delivery.

"More work could have been undertaken at the early design stage of the policy to understand adjustments required to existing processes to accommodate the new national colleges," the report states.

Staff at some of the National Colleges suggested to the researchers that employer contributions could be sought to co-fund salaries for senior teaching positions in order to bring them closer in line with the industry average.

Four of the colleges have opened their doors since the programme launched in 2016, including NCfN, Ada National College for Digital Skills, National College Creative Industries (NCCI), and National College for High Speed Rail (NCHSR).

A fifth national college, specialising in onshore oil and gas, was put on hold by its overseers United Kingdom Onshore Oil and Gas (UKOOG) while "greater clarity and progress by way of timing and the scale of production activities is ascertained".



The report also covers how learner numbers across all of the colleges have been below target because of "unforeseeable circumstances" from capital build projects and "slippage" in the delivery of national infrastructure projects affecting apprenticeship demand.

"More work could have been undertaken at the early design stage of the policy"

Such was the case with NCHSR, where delays in announcing HS2 contractors meant employers were unable to commit to the apprentice volumes they had originally anticipated, and the National College for Onshore Oil and Gas, which the report says was paused "due to weak economic conditions in the sector".

An Ofsted report into National College Creative Industries, released last November, found it had just 24 classroom learners and 81 apprentices. NCCI had predicted it could attract 450 learners in 2018/19.

This week the college relaunched as NCCI Ltd, with South Essex College signed on to deliver what was the college's classroom learning and Access Creative College running apprenticeships provision.

Department for Education representatives were attributed in the report as saying the narrow definition of colleges as highly specialist institutions has further impeded them from meeting their learner number targets.

And even the viability of the colleges' original learner numbers has been called into question by stakeholders, the report reads, because the colleges had predicted growth levels during the first five years of operations which would have been without precedent in the FE sector.

"The colleges are not yet national in their scope"

Only NCfN has met its learner number targets for the 2018/19 academic year and Ada has come close; but NCCI and NCHSR both fell short.

The report does say, however, that given the various challenges the colleges have faced it is impossible to assess if these targets could have been achieved in different circumstances.

It concludes: "Across all National Colleges, learner numbers are lower than initially forecast in their original business plans and the colleges are not yet national in their scope."

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News

Could free travel drive th

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As the Manchester mayor's flagship policy for students enters its second term, JL Dutaut asks if it's one worth following – and if so, who should drive?

It's boom time for Manchester's colleges.

"We are seeing a significant increase in the number of students entering further education," says The Manchester College principal and Greater Manchester College Group chair Lisa O'Loughlin. "Manchester College alone has seen more than 300 additional 16-to-18-year-olds enrol this September compared with last year, with many of the other colleges reporting similar increases."

"A scheme has been promised and has yet to materialise"

That represents an extra £1.5 million in extra per-pupil funding – a real boon whilst colleges await the 2019 general election's promised increases in capital investment.

But to understand why Manchester is bucking the trend, we have to look to two other elections, both in 2017. The first was the Greater Manchester mayoral election, won by Labour's Andy Burnham. The second, the 2017 general election, narrowly won by Theresa May.

It was on the campaign trail that Burnham visited Bury college and heard from Olivia a student working with charity Reclaim Project. "Do something to help young people with the cost of transport," she told him, and it became part of his manifesto. By July 2019, mayor Burnham had announced the upcoming launch of a two-year pilot of Our Pass – giving all under-18s unlimited free bus travel and reduced off-peak tram fares in the whole Greater Manchester area.

The scheme, sponsored by a number of organisations, chief among them JD Sports, went live last September. Some 37,000 Our Pass cards have since been issued, with cardholders making 5 million journeys – around 250,000 a week – over the past five months.

The prompt and effective implementation of Our Pass is in stark contrast to the promise made in the Conservatives' 2017 manifesto, in which the party committed to implementing "significantly discounted bus and train travel for apprentices".

Subsidised travel is not a natural fit for Conservative economics. In fact, the Taxpayers' Alliance suggests the effect could be to have taxpayers in rural areas (where public transport is less readily available) subsidising bus passengers in London, who account for half of the nation's 4.5 billion annual bus journeys.

Nevertheless, while a promised scheme has yet to materialise, the government maintains that it isn't resting on its laurels. It has introduced the 16-17 Railcard (which offers a 50 per cent discount on train fares), while older apprentices can use the 26-30 railcard (which offers a third off all off-peak fares). It has updated guidance on local authorities' duties "to support those in education and training post-16, including apprentices" with transport, and the DfE also points out that the ESFA provides additional payments to support "apprentices who are young or from disadvantaged backgrounds".

In addition, the DfE says there are "a number of apprentice concessionary schemes offered by local authorities, individual train and bus operators and the National Union of Students via their Apprentice extra card". But the Department for Education and Department for Transport are still working on the "joint proposal for discounted public transport for apprentices" – promised as long ago as 2017, and last discussed in parliament nearly six months ago.

On that matter, the DfE passed on the opportunity to comment, stating that the joint proposal is being led by the DfT. When contacted, the DfT nearly missed its stop, and when comment did come, it was to inform us that "this policy is owned by the DfE", leaving us to wonder just who is driving the bus.

Some information was forthcoming nonetheless, and it shows that while the government wants us to "get fired up" for National Apprenticeship Week this week, discounted travel for apprentices is very much on the backburner. It is not due to be delivered until 2021 – four years after it was promised.


Andy Burnham

Education and enrichment

The National Union of Students' (NUS) vice president for further education, Juliana Mohamad Noor, is clear on her expectations. "We hope that in the coming budget we will finally see some money for this, otherwise it will be just another empty ploy to win over young people," she says. NUS research shows that "49 per cent of FE students were concerned about the amount they spend on travel, and 44 per cent of those who had missed college had done so because they didn't have the money to get there."

In a system set up so that providers compete for students – and are held accountable for those students' attendance – access and accessibility are paramount to ensuring equity for students and colleges alike. This is especially true for areas with higher levels of disadvantage, as well as for rural areas.

According to 2016 research by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 70 per cent of FE students travel less than 10km to their providers, and 50 per cent travel less than 6km. "Time and cost of travel are key constraints," the report says, to "learners' choices about FE." The same report adds that "where travel is free, they are often willing to travel further".

The report cites London as an

News

e sector to new heights?

example, but the evidence is also borne out in Manchester. At Trafford College, principal Lesley Davies reports that "learners say they now have the freedom to make an informed choice of where they wish to study without the restrictions they may have encountered before". At open evenings, she adds, the college are seeing prospective learners "from areas of Greater Manchester that are further afield than would usually be the case".

For Andy Burnham, education doesn't just happen in the classroom. Our Pass, he says, "is designed to show everyone growing up in our city-region that we believe in them". Referring to the substantial number of cultural offers bundled in with Our Pass, he adds that "The new opportunities we are releasing are giving young people the chance to explore the amazing place we live in and go even further."

Access to enrichment opportunities is correlated to educational attainment, and it is also distributed unevenly between urban and rural areas and between more- and less-advantaged groups. In essence then, the free and discounted travel available to students in Manchester and London contributes to tackling within-city inequalities, but only further exacerbates the divide between metropolitan students and their rural peers.

While the government's proposal to discount travel for apprentices can only be welcome, it will in fact do little to even that out, especially since applications for levels 2 and 3 apprenticeships continue to fall, so that an already-small target group is only shrinking further.

Travel poverty

Within Manchester, Our Pass isn't without teething problems. Trafford College, for example, has struggled to communicate the policy to a small number of students, whose confusion about how their travel is subsidised has left them feeling that the college is doing less to assist them. In fact, they are simply drawing less on ESFA funding – and like all colleges in the Greater Manchester area, Trafford College even reimburses the Our Pass £10 admin fee for those in financial hardship.

But this does point to a confused state of affairs. With corporate sponsors, local government, colleges and bus companies themselves involved, who is taking ultimate responsibility for young people's access to education, and who is accountable for its delivery now and into the future?

> "With T levels, the problem of inequality of access is only likely to get worse"

By and large though, students at Trafford College have embraced Our Pass. "It takes the stress out of money and travel," one said. Another volunteered that Our Pass "has made getting to work easier, and I don't have to worry about getting to college".

But individual stories are no evidence base, and while the six-term pilot is only in its second term, early indications from bigger data sets are also good. According to Andy Burnham's social enterprise advisor and Our Pass lead, Rose Marley, a marked dip in bus journeys is evident over the half-term break, showing that a vast majority of those journeys are to and from schools and colleges.

The evidence is clear and growing that travel poverty is negatively affecting student choice, attainment and wellbeing. In turn, it is also affecting colleges and regions who can't draw from the whole pool of local talent and are hobbled in delivering on their local industrial strategies.

But the reality is that regional implementation can only deliver unequally across the country. Left to local authorities, the effect can at best only be geographically uneven – and at worse it could compound wealth inequality. While the Manchester model is delivering for young people there, in economically left-behind communities where sponsorship could be harder to come by, taxpayers faced with footing more of the bill could decide not to pursue the policy.

What's more, with mandatory placements of three months forming a major part of the upcoming T levels, the problem of inequality of access is only likely to get worse – and could mean the new 'gold-standard' qualification remains the preserve of so-called metropolitan elites.

Ultimately, delivering on the twin promises of student choice and of colleges as global Britain's regional engines of growth will require more than piecemeal policy nudges. And even if nudges are all the policy we get, they will need to be delivered faster than this one.

But maybe policies in further education are like buses, and three might turn up soon.

FREE TRAVEL BY NUMBERS

3 THE NUMBER OF YEARS SINCE THE GOVERNMENT PROMISED DISCOUNT TRAVEL FOR APPRENTICES

5 THE NUMBER OF MONTHS SINCE MANCHESTER LAUNCHED OUR PASS

44 THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO'VE MISSED COLLEGE DUE TO TRAVEL COSTS

49 THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO ARE CONCERNED ABOUT TRAVEL COSTS

70 THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO TRAVEL LESS THAN 10KM TO COLLEGE

300 THE NUMBER OF EXTRA STUDENTS THE MANCHESTER COLLEGE HAS RECRUITED THIS YEAR

37,000 THE NUMBER OF OUR PASS CARDS ISSUED

250,000 THE AVERAGE WEEKLY NUMBER OF OUR PASS JOURNEYS

1,500,000 THE ESTIMATED AMOUNT OF EXTRA FUNDING THE MANCHESTER COLLEGE WILL RECEIVE THIS YEAR

5,000,000 THE NUMBER OF OUR PASS JOURNEYS SINCE ITS SEPTEMBER LAUNCH

1,400,000,000 THE ESTIMATED COST OF ROLLING OUT FREE TRAVEL FOR ALL UNDER-25S

4,500,000,000 THE TOTAL NUMBER OF BUS JOURNEYS EACH YEAR IN THE UK

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PM TRAINING

Competitive salary and benefits
Based in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire

PM Training is an award-winning social enterprise, and Staffordshire's largest independent provider of apprenticeships for young people. Each year we work with over 2,500 learners, to help them begin successful careers.

The role:

We're looking to recruit an Executive Director to lead our business through the next phase of its growth; delivering more services and supporting more young people.

As part of **we are aspire**, you will also contribute to the wider group, which comprises Aspire Housing and our Realise charity. You will play a key role in helping us to collectively revitalise communities, by providing homes, training, employment and support.

You are:

An ambitious, innovative and strategic leader, who will energise our training business to deliver exceptional outcomes for our learners, customers and business partners.

More about us:

www.pmtraining.org.uk and **www.youtube.com/user/theaspiregroup1**
We want a diverse workforce and welcome applications from all suitably qualified or experienced people.

For more about the role and to apply:

Go to: **www.aspirehousing.co.uk/careers**
Closing date: **Sunday, 23rd February 2020**
First stage interviews: **Friday, 28th February 2020**

To arrange a confidential informal discussion with our Group Chief Executive please contact Charlotte Davies on **01782 854801** or email **cdavies@aspirehousing.co.uk**

Part of **we are aspire**

Barnsley College | Barnsley Sixth Form College | Barnsley College Higher Education

Vice Principal Funding and Performance

Salary: Up to £75k per annum

At Barnsley College we encourage all of our students and staff to dream big and we are proud to say that studying at Barnsley College helps to inspire our learners and transforms their lives.

We are seeking a new Vice Principal for Funding and Performance to join our senior leadership team and to make a significant contribution to the achievement of college priorities. In this role you will provide strategic leadership to MIS and funding with a particular emphasis on high quality, accessible and user-friendly information systems and processes whilst ensuring the college is proactively managing the relationship between funding and learner outcomes. In addition, the post holder will provide line management to our new Director of IT.

We have retained the services of FE Associates to support us with this important appointment. Interested parties are advised to have an initial discussion with our lead consultant, Matt Atkinson, ahead of the closing date and prior to submitting an application. This can be arranged by emailing matt.atkinson@fea.co.uk

Closing date: Noon on Friday 28 February 2020
Interview date: To be confirmed

FEA FE ASSOCIATES

For more information and a candidate pack visit www.fea.co.uk/bc-vpfp/

exeter college

Chief Financial Officer (CFO)

£70,000-£90,000 depending on experience and generous benefits package
Permanent, Full-time

Exeter College is looking to recruit an exceptional candidate to join our high performing College in the new role of CFO. The ideal candidate will be a qualified accountant and be comfortable working as a team to deliver excellence for our students, staff and stakeholders. The CFO will be a Senior Post holder, appointed by the Governors and line managed directly by the Principal and CEO. The successful candidate may come from an education setting, commercial background or a third sector environment.

Exeter College is a £43m turnover, growing tertiary college, that enjoys good financial health, effective financial control and clean audits. The college has just started the first phase of a twenty-year estates master plan and a key element of the CFO role will be to work with colleagues, funders and stakeholders to enable the college to realise the next phase of its estates plans.

The CFO will lead on the formation of the College financial objectives and ensure the College remains financially robust, while ensuring that it works towards its vision of becoming an Exceptional College. In addition, the CFO will lead the College's risk management processes and help the organisation balance its ambition within the available funding envelope.

The College is a Sunday Times Top 100 Employer and this post comes with a potential relocation package.

To apply visit:
https://exe-coll.ac.uk/about/jobs/

Closing date is 13/02/2020, with a selection day in Exeter on 12/03/2020.

HS DC

VICE-PRINCIPAL FINANCE & FACILITIES

Location: Waterlooville, Hampshire

Salary: £80k

This is an exciting time to join HSDC. A dynamic FE College that has been created following two mergers and now comprises three campuses at Alton, South Downs (Waterlooville) and Havant. We are a forward-thinking tertiary provider meeting the needs of over 9,000 full and part-time students and 500 employers in South and East Hampshire through the commitment and passion of some 900 staff.

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.

Deputy Principal

Ref 200148 (2 posts) Salary: Up to £85, 000 p.a.

Runshaw is a highly successful and comprehensive tertiary college with a national reputation for excellence and an annual turnover of £27 million. The college has been rated "Outstanding" by Ofsted for well over 20 years.

We are proud of our organisational culture and of our team of 700 talented and dedicated staff who deliver high quality education, training and support to 5,000 full time 16-18 students and 1,200 adult students and apprentices.

Following the recent promotion of both Deputy Principals to Principal posts, one of which is at Runshaw, we are now seeking to appoint two Deputy Principals to join our senior leadership team. You will be an experienced senior leader in the 16-18 or further education sector with clear strategic vision and a very strong track record of student achievement and success. You will have excellent leadership and people management skills and be capable of sustaining very strong partnerships within the local community.

Above all, you will be passionate about teaching and learning and meeting the needs of our community. You will also be fully committed to our ethical, high performance, supportive culture, always looking for ways in which we can make the college an even better place to study and work.

Closing date for this post is **12 noon, Tuesday 11th February 2020.**

Interviews will take place on **Thursday 27th and Friday 28th February 2020.**

For further information and to apply, please visit **https://www.runshaw.ac.uk/the-college/jobs/our-vacancies/**. Alternatively, please email **HR@runshaw.ac.uk** or call **01772 642004**, quoting the vacancy reference number.

Runshaw College is committed to equal opportunities and safeguarding and promoting the health, safety and welfare of all members of our college community.

www.runshaw.ac.uk

disability confident · LSIS BEACON · Ofsted Outstanding 2007-2008

Buckinghamshire College Group
Aylesbury Wycombe Amersham

Curriculum Manager for English

Job reference: REQ0178

Salary: 34,824 - 39,195

Do you enjoy sharing your knowledge and expertise, have a desire to make a difference and want to be involved in educating young people?

We are seeking to recruit a highly motivated, forward thinking individual as our Curriculum Manager for English, to join our dedicated English and Maths team at our Aylesbury campus.

By joining our College your expertise will play a real part in shaping young people's development and transforming their lives. We believe that education should inspire and develop our future generations.

What you need to be successful in this role:

- To have drive, determination and a clear focus on high quality teaching and learning that will lead to high levels of achievement for learners
- To provide leadership and direction, giving team members clear responsibilities and accountabilities that align to college strategies and values
- To maximise staff utilisation and resources through astute financial management in order to provide a distinctive high quality student experience
- Although this is a management role you will be expected to lead by example and teach your students to a high calibre

Benefits include:

- Competitive holiday entitlement
- Pension scheme
- BCG Altitude Plus Membership scheme
- CPD to develop new skills and expand your opportunities
- Plus many more....

Our staff are the most important resource that the College has in securing this success, and look forward to welcoming you to the team.

For more information or to apply for this role either visit our website **https://www.buckscollegegroup.ac.uk/what-we-do/working-at-bcg** or email **hr@buckscollegegroup.ac.uk**

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News

Williamson offers his reassurance that apprenticeship system will be fixed

YASEMIN CRAGGS MERSINOGLU
YASEMIN@FEWEEK.CO.UK

From front

Exclusive

Days after Ofsted criticised the government for locking young people out of the apprenticeship system, education secretary Gavin Williamson has offered his "reassurance".

"I'm determined to make sure the apprenticeship system works for the people that can benefit the most", he said.

Williamson made the comments whilst writing in *FE Week*'s National Apprenticeship Week 2020 supplement.

Concerns about graduate recruitment schemes being rebadged as apprenticeships, falling starts for young people, a lack of level 2 standards and the levy budget running out have been building for more than a year.

In December 2018 the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education projected that the shortfall in the budget for England could rise to £1.5 billion during 2021/22.

The National Audit Office further sounded the alarm over the financial sustainability of the programme in March 2019 after it found the average cost of training an apprentice hit double what the government predicted.

And writing about apprenticeships in *FE Week* on Wednesday, Ofsted's deputy director, Paul Joyce, said: "There is a real danger that young people aiming to step on to the career ladder are discovering that the vital bottom rungs simply do not exist."

Numerous questions have also been tabled in Parliament from concerned MPs, including chair of the education select committee, Robert Halfon.

Boris Johnson said it was "absolutely right" to follow the advice of Halfon and "reform the apprenticeship levy" at prime minister's questions last month.

He confirmed the education secretary would be updating the House of Commons "in due course" about the proposals.

In his article for *FE Week*, Williamson said: "I'm aware that many of you have raised questions or concerns about funding for apprenticeships as well as the future direction of the apprenticeships programme. I want to reassure you that I am looking at all of this very carefully.

"I'm determined to make sure the system works for the people that can benefit the most from the life-changing impact apprenticeships can have, and that it works better for employers and providers too."

He added that "improvements" are in progress – including moving smaller employers "on to our award-winning digital apprenticeship service, so they can choose the training provider that works for them".

Williamson also addressed other areas of concern regarding the quality of apprenticeship provision.

He said: "We've put in place new tougher rules for providers and employers applying to get on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers, and they now have to meet strict criteria to become registered training providers.

"Strengthened oversight and tighter monitoring also means we can take swift and decisive action against poor performance by providers, or attempts by them to break, or manipulate the rules."

The education secretary added that he had commissioned the website Mumsnet to survey over 1,000 parents about their attitudes towards apprenticeships due to the persistence of "lingering stereotypes".


Gavin Williamson

Three in five parents who responded said they were concerned their child would be "stuck doing more menial tasks, such as making the tea" in an apprenticeship.

The research also found around 45 per cent were unaware that apprenticeships go up to degree level, while a third of parents said they still associated them with manual jobs.

Williamson said he knew that everyone in the sector had been "working hard" to tackle such assumptions.

"We'll be doing everything we can to change people's perceptions over the coming years so that they recognise the work which goes into delivering apprenticeships and the opportunities they provide," he added.

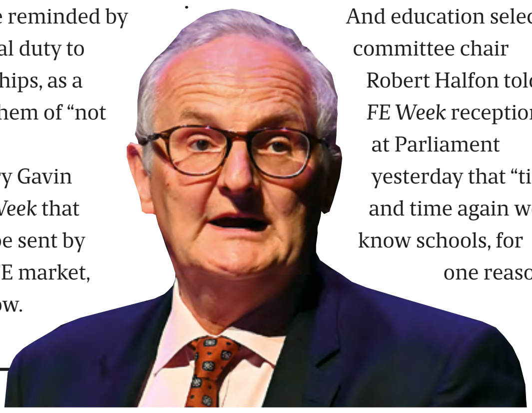
Schools take another Agnew tongue-lashing for apprenticeship failings

FRASER WHIELDON
FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Exclusive

Headteachers at schools across England will again be reminded by ministers of their legal duty to promote apprenticeships, as a leading MP accuses them of "not doing enough".

Education secretary Gavin Williamson told *FE Week* that warning letters will be sent by the minister for the FE market, Lord Agnew, tomorrow.


Lord Agnew

He said they've been drafted as the government "wants to make sure every young person is aware of just how rewarding doing an apprenticeship can be – no matter what their skills, interests and aspirations".

And education select committee chair Robert Halfon told an *FE Week* reception at Parliament yesterday that "time and time again we know schools, for one reason or another, are not doing enough to promote apprenticeships".

"If we're going to change the views of parents, and if we're going to have more young people thinking an apprenticeship is the right thing to do, we need to have people going into schools," he added.

Under the so-called Baker clause, all local authority-maintained schools and academies have since January 2, 2018 been legally obliged to give education and training providers the opportunity to talk to pupils in years 8 to 13 about technical qualifications and apprenticeships.

They must publish a policy statement online to this effect, as well as details about the careers programmes they offer, how the success of these programmes are measured and when the published information will be reviewed.

The clause became law after the government adopted an amendment to the 2017 Technical and Further Education Act, proposed by former education secretary Lord Baker, who claimed schools were "resisting" those who tried to promote more vocational courses to pupils.

A YouGov survey released last week and commissioned by the training provider JTL, found that 11 per cent of 15- to 18-year-olds were being encouraged to take up an apprenticeship.

Department for Education has so far shied away from intervening where schools are not complying with the Baker Clause.

Last year the DfE admitted no action was taken against schools between January 2, 2018 and January 2, 2019 in response to a previous freedom of information request from *FE Week*.

This is despite a report by the Institute for Public Policy Research, published around that time, that found two-thirds of schools were flouting the clause.

The government's lack of action has led the Baker-Dearing Trust to label their own founder's clause a "law without teeth," adding there was not much point in passing the law if the government did not "follow it up".

But, they added, getting the government's weight behind the law was the "best we can hope for".

Experts

SAMANTHA BATRA

Save Wornington College campaigner

How we fought to save our local college – and won

When the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea sought to sell off a local college, they reckoned without the passion and organisational skills of local residents, says Samantha Batra

It started in the wind and the rain outside the gates of the beleaguered college. It started with a gathering of staunch campaigners in 2016 as news leaked out that the Kensington and Chelsea College (KCC) board had sold the land and building that housed its Wornington Road site.

The site was sold to Kensington and Chelsea council who were notorious for "regeneration" development; and it was no surprise that the "Royal Borough" had plans (word had it) to demolish the building and build luxury apartments.

The deal was clandestine but soon rumour spread and it stirred our North Kensington community. At times, members of the regime came out and tried to intimidate the protestors. We were not put off. However, when the Grenfell atrocity happened, the tragic loss of our friends and neighbours traumatised us with a pain that permeates our people still. Our battle to save our precious college was accelerated as our community struggled with a raw, open wound.

At a community meeting at Bevington Primary School in September 2017 we challenged the powers that reigned, though we were repeatedly told by the board and executive and the leaders of RBKC that that there was simply no money left. Our college was being forced into a toxic merger with Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College (EHWLC) and there was no alternative. They even started to decamp the college assets and ship them out to EHWLC; most of the hairdressing and beauty equipment simply disappeared over a few days.

Emboldened by anger, frustration and sorrow, our campaign snowballed and we reached into the far corners of our community and ensured that people were informed about the skulduggery. Some people were sceptical, but we maintained the pressure, holding a weekly street stall in Portobello Road, handing out leaflets, making videos, circulating mischievous lampoons and staging noisy demonstrations at Wornington Road and even Hortensia Road (the other KCC site). Time and again, we invited people to come and discuss with us the possibilities for our much-neglected friend, the "invisible" college. We met in stuffy school halls and other community spaces and all were welcome.

> "Emboldened by anger and sorrow, our campaign snowballed"

Our campaign group – made up of disparate people – fought on, all of us giving countless hours and our energy. Sometimes we didn't agree but we had a common goal and we stuck to it. We met ministers and mandarins along the way in the hallowed corridors of power. Some seemed powerless, others listened and took action.

When the outgoing KCC board and executive congratulate themselves on their achievements, as in the *FE Week* article of January 15, applauding the "new culture of openness and trust, paving the way for the KCC merger", remember that we have been pitched against them for more than three and a half years. They would have long submitted to the disastrous merger with EHWLC at the end of 2017. It was the Save Wornington College Campaign who pressed for more, who enabled the damning Kroll Report that pointed to the machinations of the council and the rotten governance of the college that led to the sale of the community's land and buildings.

Now that we have finally arrived at this alliance with Morley College, after months and months of negotiations, we are engaged in the transition of KCC to Morley College, North Kensington.

"The opportunity to achieve this vision is the result of determined advocacy and activism in the North Kensington community, led by the Save Wornington College Campaign," stated Morley College's press release on February 3, 2020.

We are determined to ensure that Morley College deliver their promises and honour the Grenfell legacy. They have shown commitment. Now is their chance to show us their integrity and be part of the renaissance of a venerable and precious community college.

Readers' reply

EMAIL TWITTER FACEBOOK WEBSITE

To be critical of colleges for running the courses learners want is bizarre

Not only is it bizarre it totally negates the facts the creative industries are a realistic career opportunity and one that contributes significantly to the economy. The UK's creative industries contributed £101.5 billion value to the economy in 2017, according to the Creative Industries Federation. This is more than a 50 per cent increase since 2010 and means the sector makes up 5.5 per cent of the economy as a whole.

Lucy Sankey Warner

Interesting article with very good insight into the reality of the situation. I'm still not convinced that the key high-level decision makers in education/training have any real knowledge or understanding of anything away from academia (which is their own personal experience, background and priority), and with the current government now established for the next five years this is unlikely to change.

Peter Stacey

What a breath of fresh air to read some well-written sense blown into the smog our sector seems enveloped in just now.

Andrew Hooper

Provider challenging 'flawed' AEB tender in the high court

Ideally if WMCA is to make funding allocations they need infrastructure to establish the quality assurance processes of organisations and capability such organisations have to deliver value for public funds. It appears that this organisation is capable, thus denying them funds has resulted in many local residents not getting the skills they need to access employment. I know the area and I can confirm that investment is needed if we are serious.

Naz Khan

11% of 15-18s encouraged to take up an apprenticeship

Young people often don't know what local employers offer in terms if careers, particularly smaller towns and rural areas. Employer engagement is key to changing this picture, otherwise traditional university will remain the number one choice for many! Such a mixture picture across the country.

Rachael Johnson

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Coupland: 'Public funding for management apprenticeships is perfectly legitimate'

Totally agree with Ms Coupland who is making a good start in her new role. There is a large, previously unmet need for supervisory and management training. However, the key point not addressed by any of the comments, is the quality of that training. If I am on a level 5 qualification, I think I should be entitled to have someone delivering it who is qualified above level 3? Also, the initial advice and guidance given to me should not be aimed at a recruiter getting me to hit their target by saying that it will involve very little work so that they can draw down a four-figure fee. Too many providers take on apprentices with low levels of English that will seriously impede their progress, or who are in a current job where the apprenticeship is not the right one for them to get the necessary experience and employer support. In such cases they are being set up to fail. However, done well, such apprenticeships will raise standards and make British companies more efficient and competitive. A level 5 or higher qualification cannot be taken by everybody, but it should require a substantial amount of work by the apprentice, support from their employer together with their knowledgeable 'trainer'.

Phil Hatton

Bulletin

Movers & Shakers

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

Morag Davis

Centre Principal, Accrington and Rossendale College

Start date January 2020

Concurrent job
Assistant principal for technical curriculum, Nelson and Colne College Group

Interesting Fact
She is a qualified snowboarding instructor

Andrew Wathey

Interim Chair, Student Loans Company

Start date February 2020

Concurrent job
Vice-chancellor, Northumbria University

Interesting fact
He is a musicologist and recently rediscovered a 15th century carol, Parit Virgo filium

Robert Halfon

Chair, Education Select Committee

Start date January 2020

Concurrent job
MP for Harlow

Interesting fact
He has an interest in horology, the study of time, and owns around 30 watches

Brian Doran

Trustee, WorldSkills UK Board

Start date February 2020

Concurrent job
Principal, Southern Reginal College

Interesting fact
He is the longest serving College principal in Northern Ireland

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

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The flagship national apprenticeship conference for employers and providers

SPEAKER ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Ofsted

SALLY COLLIER
Chief regulator, Ofqual

JENNIFER COUPLAND
Chief Executive, Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education

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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

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

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

Solutions: See right

Spot the difference
To WIN an *FE Week* mug

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

Last Edition's winner: Alyson Shields

Solutions

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

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