

**MEET THE NEW
APPRENTICESHIPS
MINISTER**

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**HS2 COLLEGE
AND OFSTED
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CUT IN HALF AFTER
LEVY REFORM**

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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2020
EDITION 308

OFSTED: APPRENTICESHIP GRADES 'DISAPPOINTING'

Full inspection outcomes dip with introduction of new framework

EXCLUSIVE NICK LINFORD NEWS @FEWEEK.CO.UK See pages 16 & 17



GAME OVER FOR LEVEL 2 BUSINESS ADMIN

LAST THREE MONTHS:

346 PROVIDERS

3,064 STARTS

59% AGED 16-18

74% FEMALE

> FINAL PLEA TO SAVE APPRENTICESHIP REJECTED BY NEW IFATE BOSS

> YOUNG AND DISADVANTAGED WILL LOSE OUT, CLAIM EMPLOYERS

EXCLUSIVE BILLY CAMDEN BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

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EDITION 308



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Workers' Educational Association (WEA)**

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How does reserving unskilled jobs for UK
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Learning to love the local when it
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Apprenticeship subcontracts halved since 2017 levy launch

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Exclusive

Apprenticeship subcontracting has more than halved since the introduction of the levy in April 2017, new FE Week analysis has revealed.

The Department for Education released a new list of declared subcontractors for 2019/20 this week – updating the records for the first time in more than a year.

It follows the launch of an Education and Skills Funding Agency consultation on proposed changes to subcontracting rules at the start of the month – as officials bid to cap deals and “eliminate” poor arrangements.

FE Week analysis shows the amount of subcontracting funding for apprenticeships dropped from

£310,659,000 in 2016/2017 – the last time the full figures were provided – to £145,270,000 in 2019/20.

In addition, the number of declared subcontractors decreased by three quarters during this period, from 1,557 to 386.

The number of contracts also dropped by 70 per cent over the three academic years, from 3,417 to 1,012.

However, there was a slight increase in the amount of main providers, which rose from 322 in 2016/17 to 347 in 2019/20.

There are two most likely causes for the dramatic reduction in funding being passed on to subcontractors.

Firstly, a new funding rule forced main providers to deliver apprenticeship starts to all the employers also serviced by the subcontractor, or end the arrangement.

Secondly, many subcontractors

gained direct access to funding with the introduction of the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers, so no longer needed to work with a main provider.

In the most recent figures, out of all main providers, the British Army awarded the highest value of subcontracts, £22,922,296 – more than the rest of the top five combined.

The employer provider gave out just four subcontracts – with Babcock Training Limited receiving the largest sum of £8,068,043.

The independent learning provider advertises that it is the largest provider of engineering apprenticeships to the British Army, and also delivers more than 758,000 training days annually for the force.

East Sussex College Group distributed the second highest amount of subcontracting funding as a prime provider for apprentices this year,

£6,881,266, to 13 providers.

In third, independent learning provider BCTG Limited handed over £5,238,444 to 20 subcontractors.

Rounding off the top five was employer provider Bae Systems PLC, which gave out £4,812,196 to 13 providers, and the CITB (Construction Industry Training Board) which offered £4,654,650 to 70 subcontractors.

The next four general FE colleges on the list after East Sussex College Group were Bradford College, Dudley College of Technology, Eastleigh College and Heart of Worcestershire College.

One of the key proposals in the ESFA's subcontracting consultation 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 “exercise greater oversight of the volume and value of provision that can be delivered by a single subcontractor”.

Its consultation said that where the aggregate value of a subcontractor's delivery exceeds more than £3 million of ESFA funded provision, the agency proposes to make a referral to Ofsted for the subcontractor to be subject to a direct inspection.

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

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

ESFA announces date for full rollout of digital apprenticeship system

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All apprenticeship starts will be managed through the government's digital apprenticeship service from November 1 2020, the Education and Skills Funding Agency has announced.

The transition will bring an end to provider funding allocations, secured through a procurement process, being used to train apprentices with small non-levy paying businesses.

Contract extensions for the allocations will however be issued at the end of this month to cover them until the full rollout of the digital service commences.

Only larger employers with an annual total pay bill of more than £3 million who pay the apprenticeship levy can draw down funding for an unlimited number of starts from the online service.

Small employers were originally

expected to have access to the service in April 2019, but this was delayed for another year to “ensure a more gradual transition”.

The long-awaited transition began last month, but small employers have been capped initially and can only make reservations for up to three apprenticeship starts.

Therefore a dual running system remains in place until November, meaning employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy are able to access training either through a limited number of providers with an unspent funding allocation or from any of the registered providers via the online apprenticeship service.

Confirming the date for when non-levy payers will be given full access to the apprenticeship service, the ESFA said on Wednesday: “It is our intention that all new apprenticeship starts, for employers of all sizes, will be managed through the apprenticeship service from November 1 2020.

“Until October 31 2020 smaller employers will continue to be able to access apprenticeships through the apprenticeship service or via existing procured contracts held by training providers – as well as via transferred funds from employers who pay the apprenticeship levy.”

They added: “Training providers with an existing procured contract will receive an extension to their existing contracts to cover the new financial year. The extensions will fund carry over costs for existing apprentices as well as new apprenticeship starts.

“However, to align with our intention for all starts to be through the apprenticeship service from November 1 2020, the funding for new starts using the extended contracts will only be available up to and including October 31 2020.”

Training providers have been told they must ensure they have signed the contract extension before the current contract expires on March 31 2020.



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Apprenticeships quango adviser qu

BILLY CAMDEN
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Exclusive

An adviser to the government's apprenticeship quango has quit after *FE Week* found he had set up an assessment company and then broke official advertising rules.

Lee Allsup, one of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) route panel members, left the role this week and his end-point assessment organisation (EPAO) has stopped claiming to offer standards they are not approved to assess.

It comes amid what this newspaper understands to be serious government concerns over the maturity of the EPAO market, more than a year after sector leaders called for the register to be "purged".

After being shown this latest case, Tom Bewick, the chief executive of the Federation of Awarding Bodies, said officials are "repeating all the same mistakes" and called for the register to be closed and reviewed.

The EPAO in question, Allsup&Dale Limited, was co-founded by chef Lee Allsup whose past jobs have included working at the The Ritz, and incorporated in September 2019.

It was the only company added to the Education and Skills Funding Agency's register of EPAOs in an update last month, taking the total on there to 268. It is currently only approved to assess apprentices on the level 2 baker standard.

However, the company was

advertising on its website that it was approved to assess seven standards, one of which, the fish monger, requires registration with Ofqual. The exams regulator told *FE Week* Allsup&Dale has not submitted an application for registration to date.

The firm's website also marketed a further seven standards "coming soon".

This is despite Education and Skills Funding Agency rules for EPAOs stating: "While we encourage you to directly promote your end-point assessment service to employers you must only do this once you are approved for the register and only for the standard(s) and assessment plan(s) you are registered to assess against."

"They have allowed a situation to develop that has more in common with the Wild West"

What's more, Allsup was a panel member for the IfATE catering and hospitality route.

The role is advertised as being to "review and make recommendations on whether or not to approve apprenticeship proposals, standards and assessment plans" as well as "make recommendations on funding bands for apprenticeship standards".

After *FE Week* brought this to

their attention, the ESFA took action. Allsup&Dale was contacted earlier this week and told that they are in breach of the conditions of acceptance, and that they are required to update their website accordingly.

The following day Allsup told *FE Week*: "You will note that our website clearly states the position of our application process for all the additional EPAs we are hoping to eventually deliver."

He added: "I am no longer on the hospitality route panel team, I stepped down to prevent a possible conflict of interest."

Allsup only left the role on Wednesday after this newspaper asked about the obvious conflict of interest the day before. He has since been removed from the IfATE's website.

A further misleading claim made on Allsup&Dale's website is that the organisation has "over 70 years developing and progressing

the education system in food manufacturing, engineering and hospitality and catering".

Allsup did not respond to requests for comment about this.

The ESFA did say that as part of EPAO conditions, providers can indicate details of standards that they plan to apply for, but they must make it clear that they are not approved to deliver those standards.

The IfATE said it does not comment on individual cases but told *FE Week* "we are clear that individuals should declare all conflicts of interest, and we will always investigate and take action where necessary".

"It really is unacceptable that ESFA have not acted on our concerns"

Application guidance states: "You must declare to the Institute any personal or business interest which may or may be perceived (by a reasonable member of the public) to influence your judgement in performing the functions and obligations of a route panel member."

Questions were also raised over whether Allsup&Dale was fast-tracked to get onto the register. EPAOs are assigned an ID number when they join the register. Allsup&Dale's number is 303 – which is 15 ahead of the next most recent addition.

The ESFA claimed this was due to a technical issue, adding that the glitch is currently being investigated.

The government was urged to have a clear-out of its register of EPAOs in

March last year after *FE Week* found a sole trader and a new company with no trading history had successfully applied.

At that time, the Federation of Awarding Bodies warned of the "extremely weak" approach to allowing EPAOs onto the register.

"It really is unacceptable that ESFA have not acted on our concerns," Bewick said this week.

"Instead, they have allowed a situation to develop, that has more in common with the Wild West, than a taxpayer-supported apprenticeship system.

"Things are getting so out of hand, that even some new entrants to the marketplace are offering 'no-win, no fee' arrangements in order to secure business."

He told *FE Week* that three "urgent things" now need to happen.

First, the register "should be closed to new entrants with immediate effect".

Second, IfATE should lead a "fundamental review, supported by the Quality Alliance partners, into the independence and integrity of the EPAO marketplace".

"If I have seen a significant amount of evidence of conflicts of interest and sharp practices going on in the marketplace, then I'm sure others have too," Bewick said.

"I am sent anecdotal evidence all the time of provider-owned EPAOs offering advantageous referral rates which would not exist if there was a clearer operational separation between these two aspects of apprenticeship delivery."

Thirdly, he said, the planned takeover of the external quality assurance of apprenticeship standards, reassigned to Ofqual in future (see page 13), "should mean that these bodies hold the EPAO register going forwards, and not the ESFA".

Lee Allsup

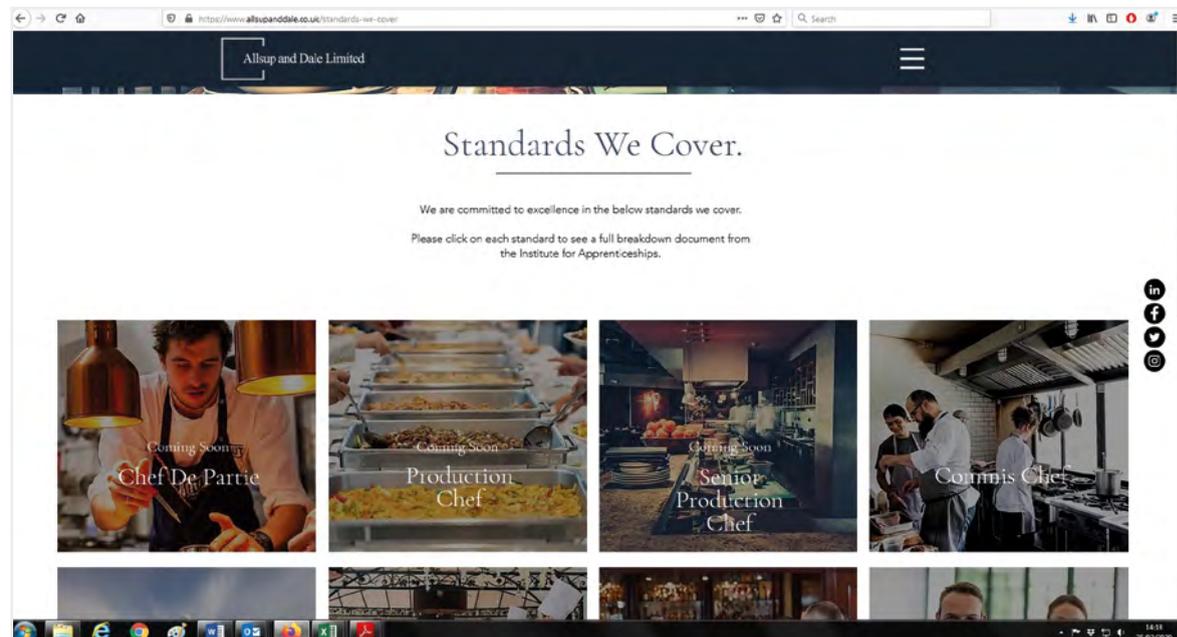


Head of Education for PAM Education and Consultancy

Lee recently joined Pam Education to lead a number of educational projects, including the International Academy of Chinese Culinary Arts, the first such academy outside of China to offer professional regulated qualifications to Chefs in the UK. Prior to that, he was Executive Head Chef at Huddersfield University, where he created an award-winning catering service, with accolades including TUCO Catering Team of the Year 2017, Catering Innovation Award 2018, and runner-up status in both the 2018 Chef Guild and Cost Sector Chef of the Year awards.

Lee joined Huddersfield from Bolton Wanderers, having led the team there to achieve national stadium of the year for culinary excellence and training. Before that, he was a national chef advisor for the Children's Food Trust and Head of Hospitality and Culinary Arts at Salford City College. Prior to moving into teaching, Lee was executive Head Chef for Granada TV, part-owned and ran a Michelin-rated restaurant in Cheshire, and spent almost eight years working in some of London's leading hotels, including Claridge's, The Ritz and Hilton on Park Lane.

Description of Lee Allsup on the IfATE's website before he resigned



Allsup&Dale's website claiming to offer standards they're not approved to deliver

Profits after breaking advertising rules

The current EPAO market in numbers

Around half of all registered end-point assessment organisations have not delivered a single end-point assessment to date, the government has admitted.

Education and Skills Funding Agency data obtained by *FE Week* via a Freedom of Information request shows that 53,362 EPAs have been completed since 2016/17 to date.

However, they would not reveal the names of the organisations that delivered them.

An official said this was because this “could be prejudicial against EPAOs and their commercial interests”, but they do “anticipate sharing this information in the future when the market is more developed”.

While they could not reveal the names, a spokesperson for the

agency told *FE Week* that over half of all EPAOs have delivered end-point assessments.

For a “significant majority” of the others, they are in their readiness development period or have not yet been engaged to deliver end-point assessment.

They added that for over 200 standards which are approved for delivery, apprentices have not yet reached gateway and so the EPAO are not required to deliver yet.

There are currently 268 EPAOs on the government’s provider register.

EPA numbers have, unsurprisingly, been shooting up each year ever since 2016/17 when apprenticeship standards were first brought in to replace frameworks.

In the first year, 299 EPAs were

| Academic Year | Number of standards End Point Assessed | Number of EPAs Completed |
|-----------------|--|--------------------------|
| 2016-17 | 17 | 299 |
| 2017-18 | 65 | 2,997 |
| 2018-19 | 147 | 26,570 |
| 2019-To present | 173 | 23,496 |

TOTAL NUMBER OF EPAs COMPLETED TO DATE: 53,362

completed, while 26,570 were carried out in 2018/19.

A total of 23,496 EPAs have been completed so far in 2019/20.

The level 3 team leader / supervisor standard, which takes apprentices 12 months to complete, has racked up the most EPAs since 2016/17 – 4,680

in total.

Second was the level 2 customer service practitioner standard, which again has a typical duration of 12 months, after recording 3,595 EPAs.

Third was the 12-month level 2 adult care worker standard with 2,929 EPAs.

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News

Education secretary launches new £9m college collaboration fund

BILLY CAMDEN

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The education secretary Gavin Williamson is launching a new £9 million "collaboration" fund in a bid to improve governance and leadership at colleges which aren't "getting it right".

Bids of up to £500,000 can be submitted by groups of colleges to "share good practice and expertise", but they will be required to stump up an extra 25 per cent in match funding between them.

The 12-month programme follows the Strategic College Improvement Fund which ended last year after £12.3 million of the £15 million up for grabs was used to help 80 colleges rated "requires improvement" or "inadequate" team up with better performing colleges.

Williamson told *FE Week* the new funding, which has come partly from the Treasury, is needed because there "have been examples where colleges haven't been getting it right and things that we are not comfortable with have

been going on".

"We mustn't forget that is a minority," he added. "Where we have got good we want to make them excellent, where we have got average we want to make them good and then to excellent, and where we have poor we want to make sure that they are actually really achieving the very best on that."

Recent cases of poor governance have led to high-profile and significant failings, including at Hadlow College, which became the first college to enter education administration last year.

Each application to the collaboration fund will need a "lead" college with at least a "good" rating from Ofsted, and at least one other college with a grade three or four, or one that has "inadequate" financial health. The maximum number of colleges allowed in each group is four.

Colleges are expected to apply with others within a shared geographic place, for example, the "same sub-regional level".

Merged colleges without an Ofsted rating can still apply, as long as one of

the two previous colleges meets the criteria.

Each proposed programme of work must address at least one of the fund's three "quality improvement themes" identified by the Department for Education (DfE): governance and leadership, financial and resource management, and quality of education.

Applications are invited for grants of a value up to £500,000 and with a minimum value of £80,000.

The DfE's guidance states that colleges are expected to contribute match funding equal to 25 per cent of the total grant applied for, split equally between all of the colleges in each group. "In-kind" costs will not be eligible.

The fund will have two application rounds throughout the 2020-21 financial year. Bid for the first round opened on February 27 and will close on April 8. The second round is due to open on June 15.

As well as the collaboration fund, the DfE has said an additional £4.5 million will be invested in continuing professional development for college leaders.

It will be developed by the Education and Training Foundation in partnership with the Oxford Said Business School, The Chartered Institute of Accountants in England and Wales and the Association of Colleges.

The DfE said the programme will aim to provide FE leaders and governors with tailored support in a range of areas including strategic planning, finance and working with employers to address local and national skills needs.

Another £200,000 is set to go towards piloting a college governor recruitment scheme and board performance audits.

FE Commissioner Richard Atkins said that in order to be "successful", colleges require "excellent governance and leadership provided by well trained and well supported chairs, governors, principals, clerks and leaders, so that learners can benefit from enrolling at great colleges".

He added: "My team and I see examples of excellent practice during our visits across the country, but we also see examples of where support is needed if standards of governance and



leadership are to improve.

"I am pleased that we will now have this expanded range of development opportunities to offer to colleges where we see this as necessary."

David Hughes, chief executive of the Association of Colleges, said this package will "help colleges help themselves and each other – proper peer to peer support, developing the skills and knowledge of leaders and governors across the country to strengthen the great education colleges already provide".

DfE to tender for college board recruitment and audit service

FRASER WHIELDON

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The Department for Education (DfE) has announced it will be piloting a college governor recruitment scheme and board performance audits.

The £110,000 "FE Colleges Governor Recruitment Services Pilot" will pay for a single supplier to find at least 30 "effective leaders" to act as chairs, deputy chairs, and finance and audit chairs for colleges in "the greatest need of help".

The supplier would be counted on to help appointees manage their new responsibilities, which could include giving them a mentor and induction programmes.

They will also be asked to find at least ten "qualified and experienced" candidates for short notice interim appointments to key

governance posts.

The pilot is "designed to test the effectiveness of increasing the availability of bespoke governor recruitment services for the governing boards of FE colleges", the pre-tender notice says, and it is hoped this will increase boards' capacity "to offer effective leadership to their colleges".

The second tender, worth another £110,000, is for around 30 board "capability reviews", which would also be run at struggling colleges referred to the supplier by the FE Commissioner or the ESFA.

These reviews would include an assessment of the skills, experience and development needs of existing board members, with an analysis of strategic planning, operational structures and working practices to identify areas which can be developed.

This pilot has been designed, the pre-tender notice says, "to test the



efficacy" of making these reviews more available for governing boards, "to increase their capacity to offer strong leadership to their colleges".

Each of these capability reviews will be followed by a report analysing any issues, making recommendations

for change, and providing a "robust" action plan to secure improvements.

Both pilots would involve a short evaluation report based on a survey of users.

FE Commissioner Richard Atkins recently extended his reach over

governance by recruiting four new National Leaders of Governance, adding to his team of 15 experienced college governors and clerks.

They have in the past been dispatched to fill positions at a number of colleges. Andrew Baird, for instance, from East Surrey College was made chair of Hadlow College ahead of it becoming the first college to enter insolvency, and Brooklands College after the government demanded it hand back great stacks of funding following a subcontracting investigation.

Funding for the suppliers in these two pilots will be available in the financial year April 2020 to March 2021. The contract start date is listed as this May and the end date is March next year.

Potential suppliers have until Wednesday April 8 to apply for both pilots.



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News

Funding rates could be slashed by almost 50% in apprenticeship shake-up

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Funding rates for some apprenticeship standards could be cut by almost half under new proposals being put forward by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

A consultation on plans for a “more transparent” system for setting apprenticeship funding rates for standards, based on “independent evidence”, was launched this week.

But the institute also published an impact assessment detailing how significant rate reductions could result and made it clear the new method “strengthens value for money, by supporting employers to pay the appropriate costs for training and enabling more employers to access funding”.

Officials have proposed three models: core method which includes five categories, core with sector subject weighting, and core with employer input. The values used in the models are based on work undertaken by the IFF Research, a research agency, on behalf of the IfATE.

The impact assessment was carried out to test each model on nine existing standards last year.

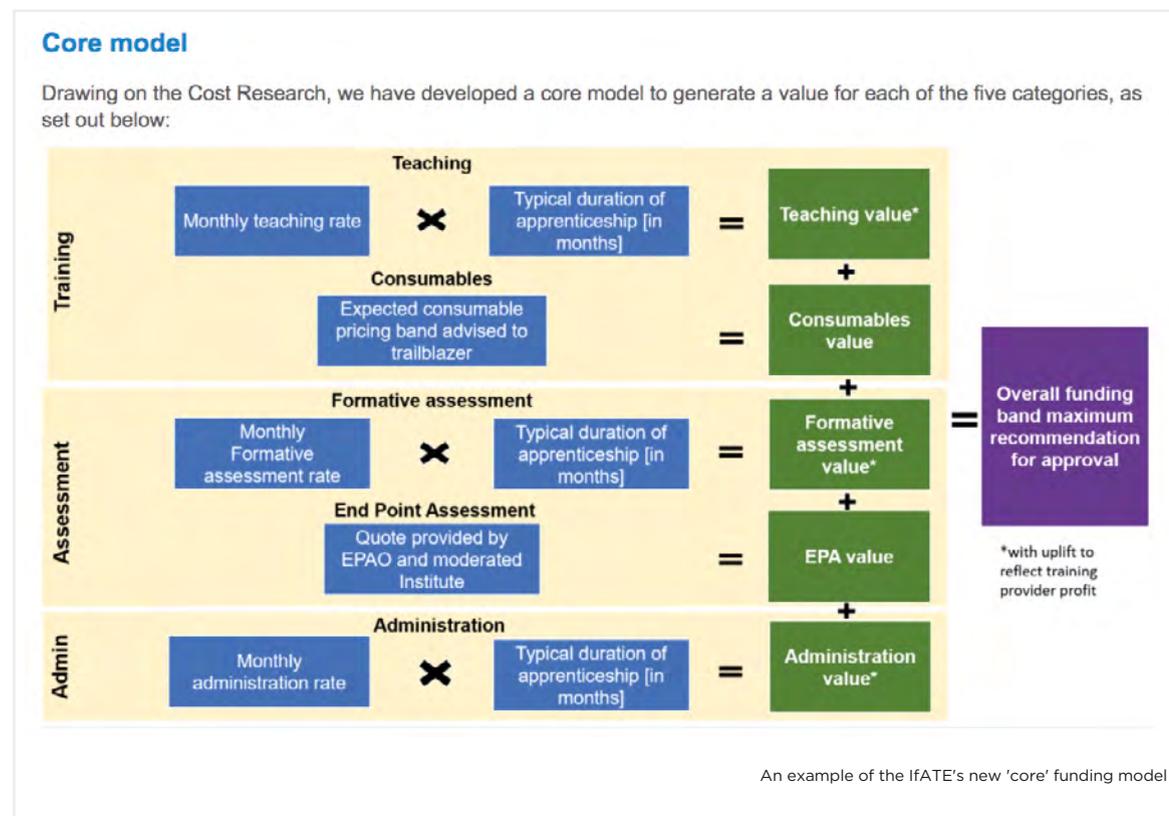
FE Week analysis shows that eight of the nine standards would see their funding rate drop under all three of the proposed models.

“We want the decision making process to be clearer to employers, providers, awarding organisations”

Rates dropped by an average of 30 per cent using the “core” method.

And when the core with subject weighting, or the core with employer input models were applied, the average rate across the nine standards fell by 18 per cent and 2 per cent respectively.

For three of the tested standards, their funding rates dropped by more



than 40 per cent using the core model.

Association of Employment and Learning Providers chief policy officer Simon Ashworth said: “We welcome the greater transparency but nonetheless it’s worrying that the interim impact analysis modelling points to a significant downward trend in funding.

“If this were representative of the final outcome, the implications for high quality delivery could be bad. Therefore AELP will be studying this very closely.”

The institute has said that there is “no intention” to reset current funding bands using the final new model in the short term.

It would be for use on “wholly new or fundamentally changed apprenticeship standards rather than to review the existing stock of standards”. But where a request for a standard to be reviewed or revised is submitted “we anticipate that a variation of the model would be used”.

A spokesperson for the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) said: “The purpose of this consultation is to make sure funding recommendations are evidence-based and transparent.

“We want the decision making process to be clearer to employers, providers, awarding organisations and everyone else involved with

delivering apprenticeships.

“It is a positive step to help address previous concerns about funding band decisions and we welcome as much constructive input as possible.”

The sector has until April 6 to respond to the consultation.

Core model

The IFF’s research found that eligible costs of apprenticeship training and assessment could be divided into five categories: teaching, consumables, formative assessment, end-point assessment (EPA), and administration (and eligible overheads).

The institute’s proposed approach is to “set a value for each of these five categories” and the maximum funding band would be “the sum of the five values”.

The pricing of consumables would range from £100 to £400 and be advised by individual trailblazer groups for each standard, while EPA would be based on a quote provided by the end-point assessment organisation.

For teaching, formative assessment and administration, the IFF research suggested that these costs tend to increase as duration increases. So, the values for these three categories will be generated by multiplying a monthly rate by the planned duration (in months) of the

apprenticeship.

The costs for these three categories have been set at £130 per month for teaching, £30 for formative assessment, and £30 for administration.

Where an apprenticeship requires the achievement of one or more mandatory qualifications, the IfATE has said £300 can be added (only once per apprenticeship) to the formative assessment value.

The institute says this “predictable and simple” core model would enable it to make transparent recommendations in a consistent way and achieve greater value for money.

“It is a positive step to help address previous concerns about funding band decisions”

However, officials noted that in some cases there may be other factors which lead to differences in costs and the core model “might not be able to capture those differences”.

To address this, it has set out a further two options “for capturing differences in delivery costs for

different types of apprenticeship”.

Core with sector subject weighting

For this option, Sector Subject Area (SSA) in “programme cost weightings” (PCW) would be applied to teaching costs, as this category had the “greatest variation” between standards in the IFF’s research.

This weighting is already used for publicly funded adult education and is also used to provide uplifts for subjects identified by the Office for Students as “high cost” teaching areas in higher education.

One of five rates, ranging from £130 to £220 per month, would be applied to each of the IfATE’s 15 apprenticeship routes.

The IfATE states that the benefits of this option are a “completely automated and transparent process” which “better reflects the variation between costs than the core model”.

The option would also “significantly decrease the burden on trailblazer groups providing indicative training cost data”.

However, the institute added, this weighting “wouldn’t be sufficiently flexible to respond to costs which are unusual for a sector”, so some funding bands could still come out higher or lower than the current band.

Core with employer input

The IFF’s research found that, on average, contact time with apprentices was split approximately 90 per cent in group teaching and 10 per cent in one-to-one settings. It also found that when apprentices were taught in groups, the average class size was 12. The £130 per calendar month rate, in the core model, is based on these averages.

If a trailblazer group considers that, for their apprenticeship standard, this value would be “insufficient” and teaching would need to be delivered differently to this ratio, and they could provide evidence to support this, then their teaching costs value would increase.

And similarly, if employers consider that consumables for their apprenticeship standard are unusually high for their route, their cost could increase as long as sufficient evidence is supplied and signed off by the IfATE.

The trailblazer group would need to provide an itemised list of consumables required per apprentice and their cost as the evidence.

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News

City & Guilds report 17.8m UK workers have outdated skills

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A third of UK workers have not received any workplace training in the last five years, according to a new City & Guilds report which says there is an “urgent need” to review adult education.

The Missing Millions report, based on regional labour market data and a poll of 5,000 working age people, has been prepared to explain the current impact of low investment levels in training and to quantify how many peoples’ contribution is being lost because they cannot access regular skills development.

It calculates that 17.8 million people in the UK have outdated skills.

City & Guilds interim chief executive Kirstie Donnelly has demanded “action from the government to reverse the decline of the lifelong learning sector”.

She said this should ensure people

in all areas have access to “critical skills development” and employers can access the talent “they so desperately need”.

The report argues there is an “urgent need for a review of adult education” and recommends the government reverse cuts to adult education.

It cites Institute for Fiscal Studies research which found spending on apprenticeships and other work-based learning for adults has fallen by around a quarter in real terms since 2009/10.

Fifteen per cent of respondents to City & Guilds survey said they have never received any workplace training while in employment, which the report suggests will make the economy “ill-prepared” for upcoming challenges from automation and globalisation.

The National Retraining Scheme has the potential to partially address the challenges, the report reads, but to fix them: “There needs to be proper funding and resource directed at adult



education to meet the upskilling and reskilling needs the UK will have in the decades to come.”

City & Guilds also recommends the government implement the

recommendations from the post-18 Augar review, which included entitling all adults to their first level 2 and 3 qualifications for free and providing an indicative adult education budget

so FE providers can plan and budget over a three-year period.

The report also proposes employers invest in training and development across the whole of their business, explaining that if their workers do not receive any workplace training, the company risks becoming less competitive.

“We would urge organisations to look at all their workforce needs for the next five to ten years and invest in their employees at all levels to ensure the future success of their business,” the report reads.

It also recommends employers collaborate with central and local governments on “Lifelong Learning Hubs” for areas of deprivation and where issues like artificial intelligence and Brexit will have the most impact on the labour market.

The hubs should focus on supporting people “displaced by the changing labour market” so they can learn new skills for fresh careers and job opportunities.

As the hubs ought to be led by local employer demand, City & Guilds said employers should be involved in shaping the curriculum and content of courses and be allowed to recruit directly from the hubs – in what the report calls “a win/win for the local community as well as employers”.

A decade of cuts in training and adult education has led to millions of demoralised and underskilled working age people in the UK, says Kristie Donnelly. To boost productivity and social mobility following Brexit, the government must face up to new and complex challenges, she writes

Across the UK, low productivity and growing skills gaps are plaguing businesses and the wider economy. When compared with our G7 counterparts, the UK’s low levels of productivity see us lagging well behind.

At the same time, social mobility is in a worrying state of decline. Earlier this year, a report from the Social Mobility Commission stated that more than half of people living in Britain feel the government is failing to do enough for the least well off, who face low levels of job security.

Yet unemployment sits at only 3.8 per cent, its lowest since 1975, so why is it that people’s quality of life and life chances haven’t continued to rise? And why has productivity stalled?

During the 2008 recession, employers cut investment in training and technology – and that has never fully recovered. The government also made significant cuts to adult education, amounting to 25 per cent of apprenticeship and vocational courses, according to the IFS. Added to that, the UK has some of the lowest investment in skills by individuals in Europe – creating something of a perfect storm.

The government has recently announced far stricter caps on immigration and told employers that the new points-based system will not allow them to fill job roles as free movement has enabled them to in the past.

Clearly investing in training is now even more

KIRSTIE DONNELLY MBE

Interim CEO,
City & Guilds Group



Investment and strategy needed to rescue UK from its low skills doldrums

critical and the stakes are higher. At City & Guilds we launched our Missing Millions research report this week, which revealed that a worrying proportion of the UK workforce are missing out on training and development. We found a staggering third (34 per cent) of working age people in the UK have not received any workplace training in the last five years. This equates to roughly 17.8 million people.

We found that particular groups in society were hardest hit by this ongoing lack of focus and investment in skills. Those living outside of London and the South East, people from lower socio-economic groups, older workers and part-time

workers are the least likely to have had training recently and to be satisfied with opportunities for career progression.

As we know, a decade of underinvestment has wreaked havoc on the adult education system in the UK. It is critical that we put a far more robust system in place now if we are to overcome the skills challenges that Brexit and more stringent immigration policy may bring. This is even more important at a time when automation and technology are changing skills requirements almost daily – the OECD predicts 38 to 42 per cent of people in the UK will need to completely retrain over the next decade.

With the upcoming budget and appointment of new regional metro mayors in May, there’s never been a better time for government and policy makers to review the adult education budget and its role in “levelling up” society.

“The UK has some of the lowest investment in skills in Europe”

I would urge them to consider re-allocating the budget and create a system that truly supports lifelong learning for lifelong employability, regardless of where people live or their background. A key recommendation in our report is around creating a network of Lifelong Learning Hubs that connect and match local employer skills demand with a locally retrained supply of displaced employees.

Our research found that as many as 31.3 million people felt that their skills were underused at least 50 per cent of the time. Coupled with this, low levels of training and development opportunities led to only a third of the UK working age population feeling positive about their career prospects. This is a pretty depressing statistic.

As we look ahead to a year of ongoing economic and political change, it is critical that both business and government stay focused on addressing productivity challenges and unlocking the full potential of the UK’s working age population. Only by doing this will we be able to increase social mobility and drive up UK productivity.



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News

DfE U-turns on loans write-off for learners

YASEMIN CRAGGS MERSINOGLU
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Exclusive

The government has agreed to write off the loans for another group of learners left with no qualifications after their provider closed, despite a previous investigation that concluded they were still liable to make repayments.

Questions have now been raised about the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) after it appeared to re-open their cases and U-turn on the cancellations only after *FE Week* began investigating the case.

In one instance a staff member from the agency, who previously dealt with some of the complaints, was accused of “gaslighting” and “victim-blaming” a student while dismissing their concerns.

This development follows a year-long battle for students to have their advanced learner loans written off after Nottingham-based independent learning provider Active Lifestyles closed down – with some testifying how their mental health has been affected

during this process.

The training provider had its contracts terminated in November 2018 after receiving a grade four from Ofsted. There were 102 listed learners at the time of inspection in September 2018.

Since July 1 2019, the education secretary has been able to cancel advanced learner loans for learners left in debt when their provider goes bust, following a change in legislation prompted by *FE Week*'s Save Our Adult Education campaign.

FE Week previously revealed how almost 700 students have been identified as possibly being in scope for loan write-offs, which would cost the government £1.3 million.

On January 27, the start of a one-month *FE Week* investigation, this newspaper asked the ESFA if any Active Lifestyle students were in scope for their loans to be cancelled.

The DfE said none were, as Student Loans Company (SLC) records showed there were no loan-funded students in learning at the time of the provider's termination.

But last week, Alexandra Allen, 31, was told her £2,882 loan for a Diploma

in Personal Training, and the interest accrued, is eligible to be cancelled.

The ESFA's response to her complaint, which was originally lodged in November 2019, cited new evidence from Active Lifestyle's awarding body, YMCA Awards, which was obtained by *FE Week*.

The SLC had told *FE Week* she was still liable to repay the loan on January 30, 2020.

The former sports coach from Long Eaton, who was signed off work with stress, anxiety and depression last year, said she had been “left in the lurch” and called it a “big scandal.”

While she described the loan cancellation as a weight being lifted, Allen said she had not received an explanation or apology from the ESFA.

Once a loans-only provider has its contracts terminated, they are not monitored by the ESFA, the agency told *FE Week*.

“Someone has to take responsibility and change the process,” Allen said.

Nick Price, 22, a duty manager from Lincoln, was notified that his loan from 2018, worth around £1,200, is also now eligible to be cancelled.

Price received a new response from the government last week after previously being told an investigation into the case had been closed in October 2019.

The first reply had referenced his complaint from June, which asked for his loan to be wiped. “It is safe to say I was losing sleep over it all,” he told *FE Week*.

“I am extremely grateful to not have to pay the loan back but I think this is only fair anyway, they haven't done me a favour, they have just done what was needed this whole time,” Price added.

Victoria Paterson, 45, alleged representatives from the government agency were “gaslighting”, “victim-blaming” and “quite rude” to her after she complained about the situation.

In emails seen by *FE Week*, she was told the ESFA had not funded her loan or selected her training provider, and that these decisions had been made by “you”.

“I was really gobsmacked by that... [the official] was being deliberately difficult and provocative,” Paterson continued.

“I couldn't understand why they were so averse to doing a proper investigation.”



Alexandra Allen

Paterson, who has since completed her qualification elsewhere, set up a support group on Facebook for learners “still waiting” for their certification in June 2019.

It currently has 25 members but not all of those who joined have had their debts written off.

The DfE declined to explain why the ESFA had not checked with YMCA Awards before, or confirm how many student loans from Active Lifestyles are now being cancelled.

WorldSkills UK Centre of Excellence project aims to support 1,000 lecturers

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The organisation behind the UK's performance in international skills competitions is launching the WorldSkills UK Centre of Excellence project to train around 1,000 FE lecturers.

The three-year project was announced this week and will be backed with £1.5 million from awarding organisation NCFE.

Five training managers will be employed full time to work for the centre. The managers are fresh from mentoring WorldSkills UK competitors for various skill challenges in EuroSkills Graz this year and WorldSkills Shanghai next year.

They will be recruited by the beginning of May and it is expected that they will be drafted into colleges and training providers from September.

WorldSkills UK said provider applications to take part in the project should come from those suited to each

managers' skill area: for instance, if it is announced a training manager from a construction background has been hired, a provider focused on construction will be expected to apply.

The manager will work with lecturers in different subjects at the provider to “train the trainer”, while “digital masterclasses”, featuring recorded sessions with training managers from other countries delivering “top-level training”, will be offered.

WorldSkills UK chief executive Neil Bentley-Gockmann said his organisation was “uniquely placed to undertake such a project” as they know “just how high the global industry standards are set and we know what it takes in training techniques to achieve them”.

Providers can apply for one of twenty places in the first year if they meet certain criteria, which includes over 1,000 16- to 18-year-olds on their roll.

NCFE chief executive David Gallagher said this first year will establish the centre's way of working, asking: “What is the Centre of



Dr Neil Bentley-Gockmann alongside members of Team UK at the official send off before Kazan 2019

Excellence in detail? How does it work with the sector? How do we make sure it does not become another tickbox for continuing professional development (CPD)?”

A further twenty providers will be selected for years two and three of the project, ten for each year. Gallagher says these stages will focus on “improving educational outcomes”,

such as Ofsted scores and increasing the number of people competing internationally.

WorldSkills UK aims for the project to ultimately benefit 120 FE providers and nearly 1,000 lecturers through sharing of the digital masterclasses over the three years.

Gallagher hopes the centre will encourage institutions which are not

heavily involved in WorldSkills to decide if they want to be more actively involved in the movement.

WorldSkills UK deputy chief executive Ben Blackledge made clear the centre “is not about us saying we can come and fix [professional development for lecturers]”.

“We're saying there is excellence in the FE sector and is there something small we can do to help facilitate best practice and invest a bit in these tutors and trainers?” he explains.

Another aim of the centre is “influencing setters of training standards” and Blackledge says his organisation has had initial conversations with the Department for Education and Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education about how this can be a “more formal and systemic approach to influencing standards”.

They are having ongoing conversations with the government's teams on FE workforce and T-levels to help with those programmes of work as well.

Game over for level 2 business administration apprenticeship

BILLY CAMDEN
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Exclusive

Hopes for a level 2 business administration standard were shattered on Thursday after the new boss of the government's apprenticeship quango rejected a final plea from employers.

Following years of repeated rejections under Sir Gerry Berragan, the trailblazer group behind the proposal was given a glimmer of hope with Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) chief executive Jennifer Coupland.

She agreed to a final showdown meeting, in which the employers were asked to present new evidence to prove the standard could pass the required criteria.

“There seems to be a lack of understanding of who a level 2 learner is”

FE Week analysis shows that the popular framework version of the apprenticeship, which will be officially switched off from 31 July, attracted 3,064 starts from 346 providers in the first quarter of 2019/20. Of these, 74 per cent were female and 59 per cent were for those under the age of 19.

Over 100 employers have rallied for a replacement standard, but Coupland took no time to make a decision,



telling the hopeful trailblazers it was game over by the end of today's meeting.

Not only did she reject their proposal on the grounds it would never meet the 12 month minimum duration requirement, but she also told them they will not be allowed to submit any further applications for the standard.

This is despite staff in the Department for Education's traineeship team considering alternative programmes but allegedly ultimately agreeing with the trailblazer group that the proposal should be developed into a level 2 apprenticeship standard.

Lucy Hunte, the national programme manager for apprenticeships at Health

Education England, attended the meeting as a member of the trailblazer group and said she was “extremely disappointed” with Coupland's decision.

“It [the standard] is a vital entry route into the NHS and many other sectors and [this decision] will be incredibly damaging to social mobility,” she told FE Week.

Caroline Bragg, the employability and skills strategy manager at East Sussex County Council and trailblazer lead for the proposed standard, argued that over 100 employers supported its development “and yet the IfATE seems intent on leaving behind tens of thousands of young people who access level 2 apprenticeships each year”.

“There seems to be a lack of understanding of who a level 2 learner is and the barriers facing them,” she added.

In previous rejections of the proposal, the IfATE has cited concerns about overlap with the business administration standard that is approved at level 3.

They've also claimed that the duties set out are “not stretching enough to require 12 months employment and training”, including the 20 per cent off-the-job training requirement.

Hunte said if young people leave school without maths and English GCSE then they “simply won't be able

to access a level 3 and in addition many of the entry level roles would not cover the scope of the level 3 business admin standard”.

Association of Employment and Learning Providers chief executive Mark Dawe said: “It's really difficult to understand why an organisation, which is now pushing really hard the line that it's independent and employer led, is going against the wishes of large and small employers in both the public and private sectors.

“This will have a significant impact on opportunities for new entrants”

“Only today the secretary of state has said that he wants ‘funding helping to kick-start careers or level up skills and opportunities’ and here we have a prime example of that agenda being undermined for so many young people who want to get on the ladder of opportunity which the apprenticeship programme provides. A chainsaw

couldn't do a better job of removing the bottom rungs of the ladder.”

He added: “It is about time the officials went on tour and met some of these level 2 learners and employers and told them to their face that they weren't proper apprentices and had no value for the employers.

“The tour could start by meeting the numerous level 2 business admin apprentices working in the department for education.”

Making the case for the standard during today's meeting, the employer group presented a final proposal document.

It stated that only 20 per cent of the new apprenticeship standards are available at level 2. In contrast, more than 40 per cent of the old-style frameworks were previously available at this level.

“This will have a significant impact on opportunities for new entrants, particularly young people, progression opportunities within the workplace, and on social mobility overall,” the document said.

“The loss of the business admin level 2 will impact young people disproportionately. In recent years, approximately 30,000 apprentices per annum undertook [the framework], and 83 per cent of these were under 19.

“Removal of the framework will have an impact on in-work progression for existing staff. For example, the NHS has numerous examples of auxiliary staff moving into administration roles through the business administration level 2, and they are unable to access learning at Level 3 or evidence the requirements through their role.”

After being shown that 74 per cent of the starts on the level 2 business admin framework between August and October 2019 were for females, Dawe said it “illustrates again that we appear to have another potential sexual discrimination problem when it comes to giving women high quality apprenticeship opportunities at an early stage of their working lives”.

“I called on the authorities to undertake some research last autumn and I would like them to respond positively to establish how big a problem we really have,” he added.

The IfATE was unable to provide comment at the time of going to press.



Lucy Hunte



Jennifer Coupland

News

SFC to be first to remove Catholic status

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Exclusive

A sixth-form college in Blackburn is set to be the first of its kind to remove its Catholic status, FE Week understands.

St Mary's College, now in government "supervised status", will make the move in order to secure a merger partner to survive after running into severe financial difficulty. Earlier this week, an FE Commissioner report about the college was published and concluded it could not continue as a standalone entity beyond the current year and "urgently requires" a restructure.

The main reason St Mary's, which is the smallest sixth-form college (SFC) in England, was told it was no longer "sustainable" was due to falling student numbers.

It was first warned of its deteriorating financial position four years ago and was urged at that time to find a merger partner or to academise.

But it has been its ethos as a Catholic college that has prevented it from doing so.

The process for removing the status

– including timescales – is not clear at this stage because it has never been done before.

St Mary's said it could not comment on this because a structure and prospects appraisal is currently taking place with the FE Commissioner. It is due to finish by April and is expected to iron out the details for removing its Catholic status.

A spokesperson for the Diocese of Salford, the district within which St Mary's falls, added they were "awaiting the outcome of that process".

Despite being established by the Marist Fathers – an international Roman Catholic religious congregation – in 1925, the FE Commissioner's report found St Mary's current trustees were concerned the college "does not meet its constitutional objectives as a Catholic institution", citing non-Catholic senior staff and very low numbers of Catholic students.

For example, vice principal Elissa Best was appointed interim principal in July 2019 but it was noted that she had not been eligible for the permanent post as she is not Catholic.

They also concluded that imposing mandatory Catholic requirements with significant financial implications

would be "unfeasible".

They have now proposed to "dissolve the trust through a 'managed withdrawal', removing the constraints on the college and allowing it to seek a non-Catholic partner as part of any restructuring process".

The report added that while land and leasing arrangements are "complex, there is a willingness to negotiate a long-term agreement to the benefit of both the trust and college".

St Mary's was first told to merge or academise in 2016 following the Lancashire Area Review.

Becoming an academy, and consequently enjoying the luxury of not paying VAT, has been an option for nearly all SFCs since former chancellor George Osborne changed the rules in November 2015.

But a group of 14 Catholic-run SFCs have been prevented from doing so due to their religious character, areas of curriculum, acts of worship and governance, which would not be maintained under current government rules.

A short clause in the education bill could "easily rectify this", according to the Catholic Education Service and the Sixth-Form Colleges Association, which were in joint talks with the Department



St Mary's College

for Education in 2018.

The SFCA this week said discussions are still ongoing but it would require a brand new education bill to add the clause.

The same issues persist when it comes to merging with other non-Catholic colleges.

Plans were previously developed to create a formal federation between Liverpool Hope University and Cheadle & Marple Sixth-Form College but this "did not address the financial weaknesses at St Mary's directly", this week's report said.

In addition, a "weak" balance sheet was reported to provide "no resilience against unforeseen events and raises

questions as to future solvency".

In a letter published alongside the report, former DfE minister Lord Agnew said it was "clear that previous efforts to secure the college's financial position since being placed in intervention have failed".

"The college is currently operating under extreme financial duress and is unsustainable without immediate exploration of possible structural solutions," he added.

In the latest financial accounts for 2018-19, the provider recorded a £347,264 deficit, an increase from £249,781 in 2017-18.

The college declined to comment on potential merger partners.

Ofsted struck fee deal to end legal challenge

FRASER WHIELDON
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Exclusive

Ofsted struck a deal to pay their own legal fees in return for the college for HS2 dropping their judicial review, FE Week can reveal.

The watchdog does not yet know the extent of their legal costs but agreed to pay them in return for the National College for Advanced Transport and Infrastructure (NCATI) abandoning an attempt to stop publication of a grade four report through a High Court judicial review.

An Ofsted spokesperson told FE Week: "It was mutually agreed that the judicial review proceedings would be withdrawn on the basis that each party bear their own costs.

"We felt that it was in the public interest for the report to be published sooner, rather than going through the lengthy and more costly judicial review process. The costs are still being finalised."

Ofsted's report was published

Monday and was shortly followed by a financial notice to improve from the Education and Skills Funding Agency and an FE Commissioner report, which revealed NCATI was facing "potential insolvency" and is now in "supervised college status".

The college now has to complete a structure and prospects appraisal (SPA). Its top boss, Clair Mowbray, is currently on sick leave and commercial finance director Martin Owen is acting chief executive.

Education minister Michelle Donelan revealed on Wednesday, in answer to a parliamentary question, it has been agreed NCATI will receive up to £1.6 million "to be used for educational purposes only to keep the college operational during the SPA".

This is on top of an emergency payment of £600,000 the college received last month, after forecasted learner numbers during the October 2019 intake were lower than expected.

A £4.55 million bailout was previously agreed to sign off the college's 2017/18 accounts.

Despite saying it would be recruiting 2,100 learners by 2022, the college only



had 187 students on roll at the time of Ofsted's inspection. Of those, 167 were apprentices.

The watchdog's report exposed how apprentices in practical engineering roles like locomotive maintenance and repair do not receive training in engineering skills they need in the workplace, such as hand-fitting and machining, so employers were having to step in and teach apprentices themselves.

It also reported that NCATI's "managers and staff do not act quickly enough to protect apprentices from harassment".

Inspectors wrote of one incident where trainers and managers did not

recognise or take effective action when an apprentice was harmfully impacted by harassment.

The £600,000 is what triggered the notice to improve and the commissioner's intervention and in his report, FE Commissioner Richard Atkins said "radical change is urgently required".

In a repeat of the situation with the 2017/18 accounts, Atkins said "without a commitment of 12 months of continued emergency funding the board will not be able to sign off on their 2018/19 financial statements as a going concern".

The details of their financial situation are still partially under wraps, as NCATI has yet to publish its 2018/19 accounts

and its board has decided to stop publishing minutes of their meetings.

MP Cheryl Gillan, who put the parliamentary question to the DfE, told FE Week "we need to see those minutes and accounts".

The provider, called the National College for High Speed Rail until last October, was opened in 2017 by then-education secretary Justine Greening and was intended to provide a skilled work force for the HS2 project connecting London with the north and midlands.

Gillan said NCATI had become a "revolving door" for HS2 personnel as the college's chair Alison Munro and chief executive Clair Mowbray both worked at line builders HS2 Ltd before the college; Munro as its chief executive.

NCATI was hobbled by the government's delay in announcing contractors for HS2, according to a government-commissioned evaluation of the National Colleges published this month.

The delay meant employers were unable to commit to the apprentice volumes they had originally and NCATI missed its learner targets for the 2018/19 academic year.

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Analysis

Apprenticeship providers struggling

NICK LINFORD
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Last September Ofsted began inspecting apprenticeship providers using their new framework.

Out went the Common Inspection Framework (CIF), in which inspector judgements relied heavily on achievement rates. In came the Education Inspection Framework (EIF), in which judgements focus far more on the appropriateness of the curriculum.

Six months into the EIF, *FE Week* took a look at the full inspections, comparing the apprenticeship grade profile to those published in the last year of the CIF.

The results (see right) show the proportion of providers being hit with a grade three of four after a full inspection has risen six percentage points to 52 percent.

“What inspectors do in this framework far more is look at the curriculum”

But perhaps most surprisingly, whilst there appeared to be little grade profile difference between new and existing providers under the old CIF, the same cannot be said so far under the EIF, with 60 percent of existing providers receiving a grade three of four.

So what does Paul Joyce, Ofsted's deputy director for further education and skills, make of our findings? “We will continue to monitor this very closely, but it is obviously disappointing. Any provider that we find to be less than good is disappointing,” he says.

Should we be worried that apprenticeship quality is declining?

“If we are in the same position after a year or after two years where we see a much higher proportion of apprenticeship providers, if we are still around the 56 percentage point mark, I'll be worried about apprenticeship provision,” Joyce states.

Do the figures suggest the new EIF is tougher than the CIF?

“The new framework is different, and inspectors focus on different

“We will continue to monitor this very closely, but it is obviously disappointing”



Paul Joyce

things in this framework compared to the last, so we know that data carries less weight under this framework and inspectors don't spend as long looking at internal data for example.

“What inspectors do in this framework far more is look at the curriculum, the sequencing of the curriculum, the link between on and off the job training and how that is coordinated and most importantly how apprentices develop knowledge, skills and behaviours that benefit them in their workplace and for their longer-term career.

“That's a very different focus than the previous framework and providers that haven't moved to that and for example are just delivering the qualification framework, they are not going to perform as well under this framework as they did under the last.”

So existing providers could be struggling with the shift away from apprenticeship frameworks (that

include unitised qualifications) to standards with end-point-assessment?

“Standards are very different to frameworks and some providers are struggling”

Joyce says: “I've said before that standards are very different to frameworks and some providers are struggling to make the move to standards from frameworks so it's a different delivery method, it is a different assessment method with end point assessment and that requires providers to think carefully about how they deliver the apprenticeship

programme.

“So it is about the curriculum and providers that are thinking about the curriculum, sequencing the curriculum, allowing apprentices to develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours to repeat and get confident and competent over time.

“They are doing much better under the new EIF than under the old CIF where some providers would focus on doing something once, assessing it once and then not revisiting it.”

Is he surprised some providers appear to be struggling to adapt?

“I'm not surprised that providers are finding the challenges of working with different employers and different sectors, the levy, subcontracting, all sorts of things that are happening within the landscape, a challenge. Some are dealing with that much better than others. We're interested in quality, we'll continue to monitor that quality carefully.”

But Joyce remains hopeful apprenticeship providers will quickly get to grips with the challenges and rise to the demands of the new inspection framework.

“It is perhaps a bit early and too few inspections”

“It is interesting [*FE Week*] analysis six months in and obviously we're also doing some analysis.

“It is perhaps a bit early and too few inspections for us to definitively say what's better or what's worse but on the broader point about the apprenticeship landscape, we are undoubtedly seeing some really good apprenticeship provision which is nice to see.”

to adapt to new Ofsted framework?

Apprentices do not receive enough feedback or support to know how to make better progress. Too many apprentices leave the programme without completing.

Most apprentices gain confidence in their work roles. A small minority recognise that they have gained new knowledge and skills, but the majority only have their existing knowledge and skills confirmed. Most do not have a coach or mentor at work to help them make use of opportunities to learn new skills, for example, observing experienced managers carrying out disciplinary hearings or holding strategy

Trainers and assessors focus on apprentices meeting the requirements of the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) qualifications. Leaders have not made sure that trainers and assessors are trained to deliver good-quality education and training for the full apprenticeship. As a result, they do not understand how to plan and sequence the delivery or support apprentices to build on what they already know.

sufficiently for their future careers.

Apprentices do not develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours quickly enough. Assessors focus on the assessment of what apprentices already knew and could do before they started their programme.

Apprentices receive a poor standard of training. Frequent changes of apprentices'

The apprenticeship curriculum is not fit for purpose. Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that apprenticeship programmes meet the principles and

Managers do not ensure that the curriculum is delivered in a logical order so that apprentices learn more and remember more. Apprentices waste their time in training in skills and knowledge that they have already mastered. For example, software development technician apprentices have not been taught any new topics and have

Apprentices gain little from studying their apprenticeship with PBD. Too few complete their training on time. Assessors do not recognise apprentices' existing knowledge and skills when planning learning.

Leaders and managers fail to ensure that apprentices receive their entitlement to well-planned on- and off-the-job training. Most employers are not involved in the development and planning of their apprentices' curriculum. Leaders and managers have not had enough oversight of the apprenticeship curriculum. This has resulted in the apprenticeship provision not meeting the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship programme.

Leaders, managers and TAOs do not consider apprentices' starting points when they plan the curriculum. Apprentices, therefore, do not develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, level 3 lead adult care standard apprentices repeat units they have already achieved at a different provider.

essential mathematical principles required for their qualification.

Trainers do not routinely use the full range of information obtained through assessments of apprentices' skills at the beginning of their courses to plan and order learning effectively. In rail, civil engineering, and signalling pathways, trainers' assessments of apprentices' starting points do not routinely take into account their previous qualifications, or what they can already do.

Senior leaders' monitoring of the performance of their subcontractors, for whom they rely upon to deliver all aspects of their apprenticeship programmes, is poor. They do not know whether the curriculum is designed well or delivered in a logical order. Leaders are unaware of the progress apprentices make through their programmes. They do not know whether teachers employed at the subcontractors

Managers and staff do not plan training effectively. The curriculum is not organised in a way that builds on what learners and apprentices know and can do. Most tutors and assessors do not provide time in the programme to allow learners and

It's all about the curriculum: example statements from reports published in the past six months

Apprenticeship grades - 2018/19 under Ofsted Common Inspection Framework

| All providers | | | of which new providers | | | of which existing providers | | | All providers | | | of which new providers | | | of which existing providers | | |
|---------------|-----------|----|------------------------|-----------|----|-----------------------------|-----------|----|---------------|-----------|-----|------------------------|-----------|-----|-----------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Grade | Providers | | Grade | Providers | | Grade | Providers | | Grade | Providers | | Grade | Providers | | Grade | Providers | |
| 1 | 2 | 70 | 1 | 2 | 26 | 1 | 0 | 44 | 1 | 2% | 54% | 1 | 4% | 54% | 1 | 0% | 54% |
| 2 | 68 | | 2 | 24 | | 2 | 44 | | 2 | 53% | | 2 | 50% | | 2 | 54% | |
| 3 | 47 | 59 | 3 | 16 | 22 | 3 | 31 | 37 | 3 | 36% | 46% | 3 | 33% | 46% | 3 | 38% | 46% |
| 4 | 12 | | 4 | 6 | | 4 | 6 | | 4 | 9% | | 4 | 13% | | 4 | 7% | |

Apprenticeship grades - first half of 2019/20 under Ofsted new Education Inspection Framework

| All providers | | | of which new providers | | | of which existing providers | | | All providers | | | of which new providers | | | of which existing providers | | |
|---------------|-----------|----|------------------------|-----------|----|-----------------------------|-----------|----|---------------|-----------|-----|------------------------|-----------|-----|-----------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Grade | Providers | | Grade | Providers | | Grade | Providers | | Grade | Providers | | Grade | Providers | | Grade | Providers | |
| 1 | 1 | 39 | 1 | 1 | 27 | 1 | 0 | 12 | 1 | 1% | 48% | 1 | 2% | 53% | 1 | 0% | 40% |
| 2 | 38 | | 2 | 26 | | 2 | 12 | | 2 | 47% | | 2 | 51% | | 2 | 40% | |
| 3 | 32 | 42 | 3 | 18 | 24 | 3 | 14 | 18 | 3 | 40% | 52% | 3 | 35% | 47% | 3 | 47% | 60% |
| 4 | 10 | | 4 | 6 | | 4 | 4 | | 4 | 12% | | 4 | 12% | | 4 | 13% | |

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News

Lack of levy funding for small employers debated in Parliament

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The chair of a leading small business lobbying organisation has thrown cold water on hopes of a boost for non-levy apprenticeships in next month's budget.

Anthony Impey, from the Federation of Small Businesses, told a debate in Parliament on Tuesday that he did not think the government would pay a mooted £1.5 billion out of general taxation to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) run more apprenticeships.

“Everybody's going to have to suffer some pain”

Instead, he said, “everybody's going to have to suffer some pain” and training providers and higher education institutions will have to take items out of their apprenticeships which “are not critical”.

The debate, held in the run-up to the budget on March 11 and featuring contributions from a number of FE professionals, was hosted by shadow further education minister Emma Hardy and run by FE Week and the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP).

Hardy retorted to Impey that the UK could attract people from around the world with high skills and higher levels of productivity, but warned: “I think part of making that prosperous, optimistic vision for our country happen is by not saying we're not going to get the money we want.”

The £1.5 billion sum was put forward by AELP chief executive Mark Dawe, speaking at the event with Hardy and Impey.

He came to that number by adding the £760 million allocated to SME apprenticeships for 2019/20, to the £750 million Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education chief executive Jennifer Coupland said last month was needed to prop up small business apprenticeships.

Dawe explained the importance of non-levy apprenticeships as SMEs “contribute to productivity, they contribute to the local community. They provide those first steps in learning, and they support the disadvantaged.”

If the £1.5 billion was guaranteed as a minimum, SMEs could start investing in apprenticeships again, as he said: “[At the moment] they have no idea where there's going to be money in the future – that's another reason why people aren't investing.

“That's why we've got this event. That's why we need to make a lot of noise before the budget. This is the one thing we think this government can do to actually start moving the apprenticeship agenda.”



Another possible means of putting extra money towards SME apprenticeships is lowering the payroll threshold at which employers pay the levy from £3 million to a sum like £1 million.

But analysis conducted by Public First for the AELP ahead of the event found a threshold of £1 million would only raise an extra £400 million, and awarding body AAT's head of public affairs Phil Hall said at the debate that lowering the threshold would be to bring in small businesses, which are “having such a problem” paying the five per cent co-investment fee with government.

“In what world are they going to

then pay the apprenticeship levy? It's just insane,” Hall said.

This all comes after survey results published in January by the AELP found that providers could not meet demands by up to 40,000 small and medium employers to train apprentices because the amount of levy funding allocated to pay for apprentices at non-levy-paying businesses is insufficient to cope with demand.

“How can we afford not to invest in apprenticeships?”

Hardy said SME apprenticeships, having originally been seen as “niche”, are “gaining so much airtime”.

“As a Labour MP, it will be of no surprise to any of you here that one of the things which concerns me the most is the impact we have had on the numbers of young apprentices and the impact it has had on apprentices from the lower level.”

Hardy said more funding is being spent on experienced, older apprentices, at the expense of younger ones trying to get their qualifications through SMEs.

She asked the attendees to “put a bit of pressure on the government. We

need them to commit to a separate funding pot for SMEs.”

A representative from South Essex College said the question which needed to be asked was: “How can we afford not to invest in apprenticeships?”

She pointed to upcoming government infrastructure projects and said: “If we have SMEs which aren't able to access skills for apprenticeships, those infrastructure projects are going to collapse. You only need to look at some of those projects which are running over because they cannot get the labour force.”

The government has attempted to help boost SME starts by allowing the employers onto the digital apprenticeship service from last month, initially capped at just three starts each, with the full rollout now planned for November (see page 3).

However, chief executive of provider JTL Jon Graham told the debate audience when they set up 50 starts on the digital apprenticeship service in January with multiple employers, that the ESFA said the same week the service was in fact “not ready”, so JTL had to cancel those starts.

Hardy closed the debate by repeating her call that “government needs a strong message from each of us – from all of the training providers, from all of the small businesses, and the universities, that education matters and you don't get things on the cheap.”



Emma Hardy



Anthony Impey



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The AELP National Conference 2020 will consider whether we are on the right track in respect of reforms to apprenticeships, traineeships, adult education, English and maths, and other provision.

The results of the mayoral elections in London and combined authorities areas in May will also offer pointers to devolved skills provision in the future. Delegates can discuss what the impact of a devolved adult education budget has been so far and what lessons have been learnt from devolution.

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News



Palace confidential: ro

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FE Week joined staff and students from four colleges and brushed shoulders with royalty last week as they picked up their Queen's Anniversary Prizes – the highest national honour awarded to UK colleges and universities – at Buckingham Palace. Reporter Yasemin Craggs Mersinoglu reveals her behind-the-scenes experience of the prestigious event...

After checking in with security and joining the small group of media covering the event (also known as the Royal Rota), I was escorted past the refurbishment work, through the service passages and given a short tour and a rundown of the ceremony. Gold décor, mirrored corridors and secret doorways lined the way.

We were then taken to our plush royal red seats in the ballroom – the home of banquets during state visits and where people receive other honours, such as MBEs, OBEs, knighthoods and damehoods.

The Royal Air Force Salon Orchestra played while suited and booted representatives of the 22 winners filed in. The music choices included a mix

of classics including *My Way* as well as more surprising film theme tunes from *Live and Let Die* and *A Star is Born*.

“Meeting the royals was a real buzz”

Guests were greeted by equerries (officers in military uniform), directed to opulent red and gold chairs and sat beneath six glittering chandeliers. A hum of anticipation started to fill the room as attendees waited for royalty to arrive. But first, there was a procession of the heads of the colleges and chancellors, including Peter Mandelson (now of Manchester Metropolitan University) and strict instructions on protocol were read out.

An intake of collective breath followed the entrance of Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall. We all stood to attention while the pair posed for an official portrait and the National Anthem rang out. Upon its completion, the future king granted his permission for everyone to be seated – which was our cue to leave. The press pack were not allowed to view

the bi-annual ceremony, an apparent contrast to the previous occasion, which had been conducted by the Queen.

We were escorted through the dining-room into the Blue Drawing-Room (perhaps named after the lavish teal and gold sofas and chairs, complete with matching curtains), where we waited while the prizes were given out. I got a sneak peek out at the palace's gardens, which host the coveted summer parties, and admired a portrait of King George VI.

After a bit of a delay, Prince Charles and the duchess were brought in to meet council members and trustees. Representatives from the Royal Anniversary Trust were lined up by an equerry, taught how to curtsy and told the most appropriate greeting was “Good Morning Your Highness”. The Prince of Wales shared a joke with them while I overheard the duchess asking how difficult it had been to choose the winners.

Entries are subject to “rigorous” independent assessment by the independent charity following an “arduous” process. As per procedure, work submitted is read by up to eight of the trust's readers and referred to specialist, technical and governmental sources. On the advice of the prime minister, the awards council of the trust then make recommendations for approval to the Queen. Boris Johnson said he was “particularly pleased to see four of our great further education colleges getting the recognition they deserve”.

“The duchess had never met a woman plumber before”

After the more intimate reception, the royals were moved into the Picture Gallery, which is lined with works by Rubens, Van Dyck and Canaletto, among others. A buzz of excitement was palpable as staff and students were about to get their chance to speak to the senior royals.

The only prize-winning college assigned to meet Prince Charles was Dudley College – it was awarded the prize for “contributing to the economy of the region” in the West Midlands. Lowell Williams, who retired as chief executive of Dudley last month, told me it was “good to bring students from



LSEC principal Sam Parrett and vice principal Errol Ince collecting their award from the Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall in the Ballroom

QAPrizes
@QAPrizes

A message from our Prime Minister @10DowningStreet about the 13th Round Prize-winners
 #QAPrizes #education #innovation #UK #impact



The official Twitter account of the Queen's Anniversary Prizes shared the Prime Minister's congratulations



LSEC principal Sam Parrett and vice principal Errol Ince receiving the prize from the senior royals

the Black Country” to Buckingham Palace.

He added that he hoped the Queen's Anniversary Prize would be of value to the further education sector as a whole in terms of reputation and putting

them on a par with universities.

The award itself consists of a silver gilt medallion as well as a decorated and inscribed certificate granting the award signed by the Queen. Williams described how his successor, Neil

Royal recognition for FE



not believe what had just taken place and that her family were proud she had been invited to the palace.

Attendees got to sample canapes including quail egg, quiches and roasted mozzarella, pesto and tomato on Parmesan biscuits. Glasses of champagne, as well as water and juice, were kept topped up at all times.

“My family are proud I’ve been invited to the palace”

Another winner, London South East Colleges, was chosen because of the technical and vocational education on offer at the group, including its “pioneering” strategic engagement programme within the construction industry. Vice principal for STEM at LSEC, Errol Ince, described the ceremony as being a memory he would have for the rest of his life.

Principal and chief executive, Dr Sam Parrett, also told me that the fact that colleges, and the diversity in the sector, had been recognised by the award was “very important... It celebrates the best about what we do.” She added that the students who got to speak to the duchess could now become role models for other learners at LSEC.

Level 2 plumbing student Melissa Cummins, 19, said she was told by the duchess that the royal had never met a woman plumber before. Quantity surveyor Jodie Binstead, 20, added that the duchess had said it was “great to have women in the industry”.

Finally, Tyne Coast College was honoured for creating digital modelling and advanced training for the planning of new port facilities as well as the safe management of ship movements.

The provider was created from a merger between South Tyneside College and Tyne Metropolitan College and also incorporates South Shields Marine School. Principal of the maritime training centre John Roach, who was smiling from ear to ear, said it was “absolutely fantastic to be here”.

He claimed the college tends to work quietly, so they were “thrilled” to receive the accolade. Roach told me he was also celebrating his 60th birthday at the palace and called meeting the royals “a real buzz”. The students added that they had enjoyed the glittering celebratory dinner at London’s



Principal John Roach receiving the accolade on behalf of Tyne Coast College

Guildhall the night before.

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

The 22 award-winning UK further and higher education institutions were recognised in 2018-2020 for “ground-breaking work and pioneering research” in a range of disciplines, including science, engineering, the humanities, the environment and medicine. A total of 275 prizes have

been awarded to 49 FE colleges since the awards, which are granted every two years, were created in 1993.

For the recipients, it was sadly time for the day to come to the end as the Prince of Wales had to move on to another royal engagement – speaking at Kew Gardens. All the college representatives left glowing with pride and full of excitement about their “once in a lifetime” experience at Buckingham Palace.



Prince Charles speaking to representatives from Dudley College

Thomas, picked up the award from Prince Charles, while he had been handed the scroll from the duchess, during the ceremony.

After speaking with the Prince of Wales, A-level student Emerson Hanslip, 17, called him “down to earth” and said the meeting was “overwhelming” and that he was “really honoured” to be there. Ermioni Bouzi, 18, studying for a BTEC in applied science, added that she could

“The prince was down to earth and the meeting was overwhelming”



Today The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall presented The Queen’s Anniversary Prizes for Higher and Further Education for 2018-2020 @QAPrizes.

The Prizes have been awarded to 22 UK universities in recognition of excellent work that delivers real public benefit.



The Royal Family tweeted photos of the ceremony and reception

Profile

Introducing...

RUTH SPELLMAN

Former chief executive, Workers' Educational Association (WEA)

JESS STAUFENBERG
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FE Week revisits the outgoing Workers' Educational Association chief executive Ruth Spellman and finds her focused, as ever, on improving adult education

You could, very briefly, be disarmed into thinking Ruth Spellman is just an unusually sweet-mannered Londoner. The 68-year-old is standing over me in her upstairs sitting-room in Highgate, with piano music tinkling in the background, offering an impeccably presented afternoon tea tray: Jaffa cakes, shortbread, chocolate biscuits, cups in saucers. Welsh daffodils, a nod to her homeland, are on a table to my right and pretty pictures of flowers, painted by her mother, adorn the walls. And then she begins to talk, and it's clear just how much the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), the adult education charity she headed until January, has lost in losing her.

And yet Spellman, who is now in non-executive roles at the Open

University and the Education & Training Foundation, keeps saying "we" about her former employer, as though she's not quite let go yet. In a rare move, FE Week has returned to interview Spellman after first profiling her in 2012 when she took the WEA chief executive role, her fourth CEO position and first for an educational body. How were the seven years and nine months at the largest adult education organisation in the UK? And why has she left?

"You're not necessarily educated at 16 or 18"

The night after our interview is her leaving do and Spellman is trying to get her speech right. "I'm going to thank everyone, but I'm going to nail a couple of things too." Like what? "I will say, we have to have weekend learning. We have to have night school. If we're going to expand, we have to invest in online learning. And we really need a big focus

on communication and marketing so people know who we are." Spellman bursts with the sort of policy-focused energetic drive that not only makes rather a mockery of the retirement age, but also indicates she may be one of the best departmental leads Westminster never had.

Clearly, the job isn't finished. When we first interviewed her, Spellman was saying she'd "like to see schools open at the weekend for adults". With no movement in that area, she today reiterates that bringing parents into schools to gain qualifications would "make more difference to education than any innovation I've seen in ten years". Similarly, she makes a powerful case for part-time learning, again and again. "You're not necessarily educated at 16 or 18 – you will need access to part-time education all your life."

"Eighty per cent of the population are over age 21, and most of them won't have had higher or further education. It follows that you need repeated opportunities to re-enter part-time learning."

"Part-time learning is the answer." Spellman fluently delivers stats, some of which actually shock me. "In colleges, 89 per cent of people are under 19. The overwhelming proportion of the adult education budget is spent on young people. That's not how it should be."

One feels that Spellman senses these priorities have never been more urgent than now – even more so than



In 2010 when Ruth was CEO of the Chartered Management Institute

when she was first appointed to the WEA and "the chairman was clear about the need for change". Mental illness and individuals struggling with debt are on the rise, she reminds me. "Poverty has increased. Social mobility has gone backwards." Out of almost 48,000 learners on WEA courses in 2019, roughly 75 per cent were women, many of them older – so many younger, disadvantaged men aren't accessing the courses. Meanwhile total spending on adult education, excluding apprenticeships, fell by nearly two-thirds since 2003.

But the biggest blow was in 2017, almost five years into Spellman's tenure. The former Skills Funding Agency announced seven regions would get devolved adult education budgets, with the requirement to tender beginning in earnest this year. In one fell swoop, about one-third of the WEA's guaranteed government

funding, roughly £7 million out of a £19 million contract, was under threat. With so much demanding the WEA's attention, this was a huge upheaval. Did Spellman decide to leave partly because of the funding change? (In fairness to her, the WEA's previous CEO, Richard Bolsin, only stayed one year longer in the role.)

"No. It was tricky, and heart-aching at times, but, no, I didn't. The organisation needed new energy. But the funding change was a challenge we simply didn't need to have."

She emanates confidence in new chief executive Simon Parkinson, former boss of the Co-operative College, calling him a "subtle" leader, capable of navigating the WEA through external and internal politics. But her deep frustration at the devolved budget situation she has left



Spellman greets award winners with the Duke of Edinburgh when she was CEO of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers

“I always thought loyalty to the WEA in parliament would see us through”



Picture taken outside childhood home in Croesyceiliog, South Wales. Her dad lectured for the WEA as did Ruth and her granddad

behind is clear.

“I’m all for localism, but we were local already. In my view, there is an overstatement of the value of bidding for work every five minutes. For a start, you’re risking breaking the bond we have with students. It’s quite hard to reach the people we reach. If you start saying to them, we’re not going to be running anything here next year, they can be put off. There’s too much casualness about breaking these relationships, and it’s really damaging.” Spellman is also concerned that annual bidding could encourage organisations to target those learners who are the least expensive to help – “not the disadvantaged, or those with mental health issues.”

Yet Spellman has striven to leave the WEA in a strong position amid the turbulence. Out of 400 WEA employees,

300 were put on redundancy notice, but after voluntary redundancies, she managed to keep actual redundancies to about 50. Even more impressively, under her leadership the WEA won the contract for six out of seven regions, only losing the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

I ask Spellman if she expected the budget challenge. “No. I did not see the funding change coming. I always thought the loyalty to the WEA, in parliament particularly, would see us through.”

What does she wish she had achieved? “I think raising the profile of the organisation more, which I have done, but not enough.”

It’s an important point. Before working for *FE Week*, this journalist had never heard of the WEA nor seen any online advertising, unlike, say, the Open

University. Before she left, Spellman oversaw the organisation’s Strategy 2025 paper, a plan she has passed to Parkinson to carry forward. It makes considerable mention of ambassadors, and Spellman says “word of mouth” can get more people involved. But in the age of free outreach on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, it seems the WEA may be missing a trick if it wishes to attract younger, disadvantaged learners. A quick search of the Strategy 2025 paper shows “social media” throws up zero results. Spellman listens intently to this criticism. One of her last moves was to appoint a social media manager.

I ask Spellman what she’s most proud of. “The WEA was very riven when I arrived between those who wanted to take it forwards and those who wanted to take it backwards. It didn’t have a clear strategy, and I brought that.”

Spellman introduced more flexibility for learners, such as short courses instead of year-long ones. English and maths skills were embedded across courses and tutors trained to provide clearer careers advice, so that

“It’s quite hard to reach the people we reach”

learners came away more confident and focused, rather than simply with a qualification. Internally, Spellman found “no one on my team had had a performance appraisal for 10 years” and she introduced training plans. “I think

the professionalisation of the WEA has happened under me.”

As we speak, Spellman’s clear-sighted passion for the organisation she has led shines out. Previous to the role, she led Investors in People, the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and the Chartered Management Institute. In a way, the WEA is the culmination of a life-long career spent powerfully advocating for others’ careers.

There is a long pause where Spellman falters, and her voice catches. “It has a lot of loyalty, the WEA.” For a moment this leader, whose own father and grandfather used the WEA, cannot speak. One senses this has been an advocacy role for her like no other – and one which, though she has officially stepped back, will continue to drive her in all she does.



Coleg Gŵyr Abertawe
Gower College Swansea



Director of Quality and Curriculum Based Swansea - circa £76,000

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- Arwain a rheoli holl brosesau cwricwlwm a phrosesau sicrhau ansawdd y Coleg, a fydd, yn eu tro, yn sicrhau darpariaeth arloesol ac effeithiol i ddulliau addysgu, dysgu ac asesu'r Coleg. Hefyd, sicrhau perfformiad rhagorol ar draws holl ddarpariaethau'r coleg.
- Sicrhau safonau uchel a chyson o ran addysgu, dysgu a chaffael sgiliau ar draws y Coleg a hyrwyddo ardderchowgrwydd dysgu a chynnydd dysgwyr.
- Datblygu strategaethau arloesol i sicrhau bod targedau cadw, cyfraddau pasio, cyflawniadau (gan gynnwys graddau), a chyrchfannau dysgwyr yn cael eu diwallu, yn ogystal â gwneud yn siŵr bod dysgwyr wedi'u paratoi ar gyfer y dyfodol, ar lefel broffesiynol a phersonol.
- Arwain datblygiadau addysgu, dysgu ac asesu ar draws y Coleg er mwyn creu amgylchedd ddysgu ysbrydoledig ac er mwyn sicrhau cynnydd dysgwyr rhagorol.

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Closing date: Friday 6th March 2020

Interview dates: Monday 16th and Tuesday 17th March 2020

News

Ofqual win: employers to lose ownership of quality-assuring apprentice assessments

BILLY CAMDEN
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

The government is consulting on plans to dump employers when it comes to external quality assurance of apprentices – and hand all of it to Ofqual within the next two years.

The only exception would be for integrated degree apprenticeships, which would be overseen by higher education regulator the Office for Students.

The move would bring an end to substantial charges, which can reach almost £200 per apprentice, being imposed on end-point assessment organisations (EPAOs).

Sally Collier, Ofqual's chief regulator, welcomed the expanded role, adding that "we believe the current arrangements are complex, and the proposals outlined by the institute will simplify and strengthen the approach in the future".

Federation of Awarding Bodies

chief executive Tom Bewick hailed the change to make external quality assurance (EQA) a "statutory-led service in future, paid for directly by government".

"It was always a crazy proposition to have so many statutory and non-statutory bodies checking on the work of EPAOs, when this is not the case, for example, in how apprenticeship providers are inspected for quality," he said.

"It has unfortunately resulted in a nascent market turning into a Wild-West market in some parts."

A consultation on proposals to "simplify and strengthen" how EQA works was launched by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) on Thursday.

Currently there are 20 EQA organisations which monitor the EPAOs that run examinations for apprentices.

The job is done by a mix of professional bodies, employers and quangos including the IfATE and

Ofqual. The institute's own delivery of EQA, originally conceived as a back-stop in the event of failure to secure a different organisation, is now in use across around half of all standards.

Sector leaders and EPAOs have long complained about this complex and "frustrating" system, especially as many of them, including the IfATE, charge various amounts per apprentice for doing the job.

The institute said the proposed changes would allow the "opportunity to change" how EQA is funded.

It "enables government to move to a model of funding EQA directly, away from a system whereby end-point assessment organisations are charged for EQA," the consultation document said.

Under the plans, professional and employer bodies would continue to support Ofqual and OfS in their delivery of EQA, to "ensure the employer voice remains integral".

A new "register of professional or employer-led bodies" would be

established from which the two regulators can draw occupational expertise.

The consultations said that in order to "retain confidence that only those organisations which genuinely speak for their sector operate in this role", the institute is proposing that trailblazer groups should nominate a professional or employer-led body to register for their standard.

There are close to 300 firms on the government's register of EPAOs, 55 of which are currently recognised by Ofqual and 46 by OfS.

Over time, the IfATE states, all EPAOs would need to become recognised by the regulators.

A two-stage transition approach is proposed and is expected to get under way in the summer.

Stage one would involve moving standards where the IfATE is currently the named EQA provider to Ofqual, in a "phased approach".

No completion date for this stage

has been given.

Stage two would then transition standards from all other EQA providers to Ofqual, again in a phased approach, by the summer of 2022.

Should an existing EQA provider choose to exit the market outside the transition, Ofqual would "work with the institute on appropriate interim arrangements that made sure coverage remained unaffected".

The IfATE's chief executive, Jennifer Coupland, said: "The institute supports employers and welcomes as much feedback as possible on how we should reform the system, so that it works better for them and everyone else involved with EQA."

"It is extremely important that EQA maintains high assessment standards and apprentices are rigorously challenged to prove they can do the job they are being trained for."

The consultation runs for six weeks, closing on April 9. The institute expects to publish its response in the summer.

MBA apprenticeship faces cull as Williamson 'unconvinced'

NICK LINFORD
NICK@FEWEEK.CO.UK

The education secretary has demanded a review into the controversial MBA apprenticeship "to safeguard the integrity of the apprenticeship brand and value for money of the levy."

"Funding subsidising re-packaged graduate schemes and MBAs that just don't need it"

The letter, sent on Thursday from Gavin Williamson to the new boss at the Institute for Apprenticeships,

Jennifer Coupland, sets 1 June as a deadline for determining whether the level 7 senior leader standard will continue to be funded.

The letter comes less than a month after Coupland told FE Week that public funding for management apprenticeships is "perfectly legitimate".

Coupland was calling on the government to find an extra £750 million to invest in apprenticeships for small employers, those that do not pay the levy.

When asked about the spiraling cost of the controversial management



Gavin Williamson

apprenticeships she said: "It is not government money, it comes from the levy that was levied directly to support apprenticeships."

The Department for Education told FE Week 34 of their staff are currently studying towards the apprenticeship MBA.

The then-director of the DfE's National Apprenticeship Service, Sue Husband, told a House of Lords enquiry in 2018 she was on a level 6 chartered management degree apprenticeship and was finding it "hugely beneficial". She confirmed to FE Week this morning she was carrying on the apprenticeship with her new employer.

FE Week was first to report, back in 2016, that management apprenticeships were already the third most popular, proving to be "unstoppable" and would likely "rocket to the top spot once

the apprenticeship levy kicks in next year."

In early 2019, our analysis found management taking the top-spot, including 1,220 starts on the level 7 MBA.

The levy is paid to the Treasury, which means it is technically public funding, and its use for management qualifications has come under criticism from Ofsted's chief inspection, Amanda Spielman, who said "we see levy funding subsidising re-packaged graduate schemes and MBAs that just don't need it".

The National Audit Office last year reported that these "new types of apprenticeship raise questions about whether public money is being used to pay for training that already existed in other forms".

And more than a year ago, the then skills minister, Anne Milton, told the chief executive of the Association of Colleges David Hughes: "We will need to look

ahead, when the system is really running well – and I think we're nearly at that stage – when we need to look at do we continue to fund apprenticeships for people who are already in work, people doing second degrees."

In a statement to the media that accompanied the letter, Williamson said: "The levy funds apprenticeships for businesses of all sizes, helping people of all ages and backgrounds make the most of their talents."

"I am committed to maintaining an employer-led system, but I'm not

"We will need to look ahead, when the system is really running well"

convinced the levy should be used to pay for staff, who are often already highly qualified and highly paid, to receive an MBA.

"I'd rather see funding helping to kick-start careers or level up skills and opportunities. That's why I've asked for a review of the senior leader apprenticeship standard to ensure it is meeting its aims."

New apprenticeships and skills minister finally has responsibilities confirmed

BILLY CAMDEN

BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

New apprenticeships and skills minister Gillian Keegan has taken on full responsibility for FE, including colleges, T-levels and adult education.

The MP for Chichester joined the Department for Education as a parliamentary under secretary of state on 14 February following Boris Johnson's reshuffle.

The sector has been missing a dedicated apprenticeships and skills minister since Anne Milton resigned in July 2019.

Since then education secretary Gavin Williamson has led on the brief personally.

Keegan's full portfolio was announced by the DfE on Wednesday.

She will look after technical education and skills including T-levels and qualifications reviews, apprenticeships including traineeships, the FE workforce and provider market including "quality and improvement and further education efficiency".

She will also be responsible for adult education, including the National Retraining Scheme and basic skills, Institutes of Technology and National Colleges, reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training, and careers education, information and guidance including the Careers Enterprise Company.

Lastly, Keegan will work jointly with new universities minister Michelle Donelan on the DfE's "strategy for post-16 education".

Williamson, who retains the same broad set of responsibilities across the DfE, said his new ministerial team "will work tirelessly to unleash potential and make the most of people's talents, whatever their background and wherever they're from.

"Working together, we'll bring a laser-like focus to giving every child the best start in life - supporting families and vulnerable children, further driving up standards in our schools and strengthening our brilliant colleges, further education providers and universities."

He added: "As I said when I was first appointed, further education and skills are huge priorities for this government and for me personally which is why I've already secured a £400 million funding boost for the sector.

"But we need to do so much more in this area so I've asked universities minister Michelle Donelan and the new minister for apprenticeships and skills, Gillian Keegan, to work hand-in-glove on building a truly world-class post-16 offer for our young people."

Elsewhere in the department, Nick Gibb continues as schools minister, Baroness Berridge has replaced Lord Agnew as academies minister, and Vicky Ford is the new children's minister.

Keegan was elected to parliament for the first time in 2017.

Her website states that she is the "only degree level apprentice in the House of Commons".

She started work as an apprentice at Delco Electronics aged 16 and whilst learning she was sponsored to study a degree in business studies at Liverpool John Moores University.



Gillian Keegan

For the next 25 years she worked and lived abroad, working in the manufacturing, banking and IT industries, according to her website.

It adds that her "experience of a comprehensive and wide ranging apprenticeship provided her with a foundation of skills and knowledge that helped continue a 27 year long business career".

She is the co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group for apprentices,

and was made an "apprenticeship ambassador" by Milton in February 2019.

Keegan sat on the influential Public Accounts Committee until she was appointed as the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Treasury in December 2018.

She has since held posts in the Ministry of Defence, served as the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Home Secretary and the Department for Health.

Readers' reply



EMAIL



TWITTER



FACEBOOK



WEBSITE

West Kent & Ashford College has debts of over £100m to almost 70 organisations

The previous comment was on the money. £2m+ on fees to consultants with little experience when front line is pushed to the limits. Seriously? *FE Week* are right to raise these issues and put the spotlight on. Also, the two sides point is right - where is Hannan, the chief accounting officer? Or MLT? And what about the governors... there has to be more to this, when there are no other colleges put into administration, and still bailed out

David Priestley

Could Wolf persuade the PM to revive night schools?

I went to college two nights a week for two years to gain my D32, D33, and D34 plus my Level 4 in Teaching Office Practices. I also did some typing courses, also audio typing. This at the

time was difficult, but I paid for it and saw the value. It had big classes and people attended, so I value it.

Steve Lawrence

New Boris adviser would 'take a flamethrower' to adult education policy

Sorry but the arts, literature and law are just as good for the economy as engineering and science. Students should have the freedom of choice to excel at any subject they have a passion for and the government should provide funding for those that need it. Harry Potter is a good example on how the arts and literature world can bring a monumental return on investment.

Austen Lowe

Well let's hope that student loans and university subsidies are redirected to subjects that will economically benefit the country and support the

professions and skills we need as a nation instead of the arts, literature, law and other subjects that we have no practical use for.

Nelly Ericsson

Williamson announces plan to scrap 5,000 qualifications - but will anybody notice?

This will have a massive impact for the providers delivering to the refugee and immigrant communities. To progress these learners into employment, basic English and either an entry level or level 1 qualification is a vital step to gainful employment and integration into British society.

Charles Bedingfield

Government slashes £11m from £20m adult traineeship budget

Not surprised. Very difficult to achieve outcomes for adult traineeships!

Tracy Landon

REPLY OF THE WEEK

West Kent & Ashford College has debts of over £100m to almost 70 organisations

I fully understand there's always two sides to any story, but really? How much money is being diverted from our already stretched frontline delivery, and who is being held accountable? Beyond the above comments I only have a series of four-letter expletives left available in response to this and they aren't really suitable for publication.

Noel Johnson

Experts

HELEN VAN AARDT

Head of sport and service industries,
Loughborough College



On the right track: there is much that FE teachers can learn from elite athletes

Helen Van Aardt has identified eight things that athletes preparing for competition have in common with teachers

An elite athlete can be characterised as someone who is able to perform under pressure in a challenging environment, to achieve an outcome, whilst being observed by an audience. Teachers in further education colleges not only have to do everything included in the elite athlete description, but they also have to ensure learners achieve their outcomes as well. Our sector is packed with brilliant teachers, and at Loughborough College we have observed that great teachers may be more similar to elite athletes than they realise.

Loughborough College has a long history of supporting the development of elite athletes both inside and outside of the classroom. The provision of a world-leading dual career offer is a key strategic aim, and if the college was a country it would have been ranked eighth in the last Commonwealth Games medal table. It is working in this environment that informs the parallels in teaching practices that can support how we strive for consistently high-performing teachers.

Understand the factors that contribute to high performance

Athletes and their coaches know what is required to be elite. There are numerous aspects that contribute to elite performance, including: technical, tactical, physical and psychological skills, supported by lifestyle. All these aspects need to be worked on. Similarly, with teaching, they need to understand what outstanding looks like and what their areas of development are, as well as taking care of their lifestyle in order to support wellbeing.

Goal setting

Elite athletes set goals. These goals can be outcome goals (long-term motivational targets) over which they have limited control; performance goals (personal standards); or process goals (the process behind performance) over which they have more control. Successful teachers do the same, setting performance and process goals as part of their development plans.

Preparation

Elite athletes prepare holistically and thoroughly for competition, often utilising a support network of sports scientists and coaches. Successful teachers also prepare thoroughly for their teaching and they too access a support network, for

example, E-learning support, TLA leads and input from external trainers.

Marginal gains

Elite athletes look for marginal gains. Outstanding teachers are always looking to improve by making small changes to their practice. They trial modern techniques and methods, using research and contemporary approaches to help develop their teaching pedagogy.

Reflecting on performance

Elite athletes consider their goals individually and, if applicable, as a team. Support staff are involved in this, breaking down performance where required. They revise their goals and set new goals, continually looking to improve. Outstanding teachers also reflect on their performance, adopt a growth mindset and are open to constructive feedback.

No fear of failure

Elite athletes take risks to take their performances to the next level. Outstanding teachers are also not afraid to take risks to innovate and make mistakes in their drive to improve performance. The culture of the educational organisation needs to support this.

Wellbeing

Elite athletes look after themselves, assisted by nutritionists, physiotherapists and psychologists. Teachers can optimise their performance by looking after themselves, by exercising regularly, eating a healthy diet and managing stress. In doing so, they are able to provide consistency, continuity and reassurance to learners.

Ofsted

Loughborough Sport gained double 'outstanding' at the last subject-specific Ofsted. The preparation, as it would be for a major sports event, was meticulous. The requirements of outstanding provision were carefully reviewed, with action plans put in place to achieve these. External critical friends provided feedback and support to enable reflective practice.

FE as a sector faces similar funding challenges to many National Governing Bodies who fund sport. Whilst we hope the decade of cuts is reversed in the 2020s, focusing on high-performing teachers will help to raise the bar as high as our learners deserve.

MICK FLETCHER

FE expert, The Policy Consortium



How does reserving unskilled jobs for UK workers benefit them, or the FE sector?

The proposed "points-based" immigration system has a number of seemingly ill-thought-through consequences, argues Mick Fletcher

Many in colleges may have drawn some hope from the increasing number of senior figures calling for extra investment in FE, specifically in order to train UK workers now that we have left the EU. We certainly need more investment, and the arguments advanced sound superficially plausible. A moment's reflection, however, suggests a dangerous lack of logic in what is being proposed, which risks undermining the sector's case.

Ian Duncan Smith, for example, was recently on Radio 4 defending the proposed new "points-based" immigration system that envisages severe restrictions on access to the UK for those earning under £25,600 per year. Put aside for a moment the distasteful assumption that low-pay equals low-skill equals low-value (that argument is for another day) and concentrate on the logic.

British employers, he said, had grown lazy, and instead of investing in staff training had found it easier to recruit skilled workers from abroad.

So far most of us would agree. He quoted the example of a Belgian company that by investing in new technology and developing a highly skilled workforce was set to outcompete UK manufacturers who clung to a low-pay, low-value economic model.

Once again most of us would share his fears (and Remainers need to ignore the argument that if Belgians can do it within the EU, why can we only do it if we leave? That discussion, too, is for another day.)

"How does reserving unskilled jobs for UK workers help?"

The case he and others make is that we must stop employers recruiting unskilled workers from abroad so that they will invest in upskilling local employees. Reflect for a moment: how does that work? I could understand how restricting the number of high-skilled migrants might force employers

to resort to training more locals: but how does reserving unskilled jobs for UK workers help?

"Large parts of the economy depend on people skills – care, hospitality and retail"

Reducing the pool of applicants for unskilled jobs might help drive up wages for those jobs; but that would provide less of an incentive for such workers to invest in skills, not more, and give employers less cash with which to train them.

Employers might decide to move from low-value-added to high-value-added business models and look for highly skilled staff to work in the new environment – but in such cases they would still be free to recruit from abroad and might well prefer to do that rather than invest in local staff. Indeed, given that they would have had to invest in technology, they'd probably be less inclined, or able, to invest in training as well.

Finally, the increases in productivity that both require skilled workers and provide the returns with which to train and reward them well are simply not available to large parts of the economy that depend on people skills – care, hospitality and retail, for example. The Japanese are working hard to produce robots to work in care homes, in part because they do not want unskilled immigration: it sounds fanciful, but it does at least have a consistent logic.

There are many things that government could do to increase investment in training. It could, for example, reverse the serious cuts it has made over the past decade in its own adult education budget. It could encourage firms to invest by raising the minimum wage or by strengthening employment rights and the bargaining position of workers; and it could encourage individual investment through some sort of learning account.

To focus on cutting unskilled migrants, however, seems not to be promoting FE but rather using support for the sector to help justify a policy driven by other motivations altogether.

Are we really keen to see London, Manchester, Birmingham and the West Midlands with no powers over education and skills spending, asks Ewart Keep

What are we to make of the apparent outrage at the Greater London Authority spending an extra £40k on a consultant to support an AEB consultation exercise (*FE Week*, February 7), and at Alison Wolf's dismissal of AEB devolution (*FE Week*, February 14)? There are two problems with these reactions. First, it is simply too soon to judge the overall effects and benefits of devolution: policy and practice are still in their early stages, and evolving.

Second, London has a larger population than many EU member states. It is a global city. As Michael Heseltine's recent *Empowering English Cities* report demonstrates, elsewhere, comparable urban areas have control over many aspects of education and skills and maintain an administrative and governance structure to deliver this. Are we really keen to see London, Manchester, Birmingham and the West Midlands with no powers over education and skills spending and all decisions made by the DfE and the ESFA? If we are, what are the intrinsic benefits of this kind of centralised, national control and why do so few other countries adopt this model?

England is unique among larger (population-wise) developed countries in the degree to which education provision is centralised. In essence, there is central government, its market regulators, and individual providers. Elsewhere, an intermediary layer of place-based local, regional or state/provincial governance institutions, often allied

PROFESSOR EWART KEEP

Director, the Centre for Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance (SKOPE)



Learning to love the local when it comes to adult education provision

to some form of social partnership arrangement is the norm. Either they are all wrong, and we are right, or we may be missing something.

This is linked to the debate about the relative merits of a coordinated system of provision versus market-based competition. We risk the dis-economies of having competitive marketplaces for 11-19 learning – where UTCs, studio schools, free schools, MATs and community and local authority schools (many of which have sixth-forms that are tiny and require cross-subsidy from 11-16 funding) duke it out with FE, apprenticeship providers and sometimes even universities.

There is institutional choice, there is competition, but it often comes at the price of narrowing the

overall range of courses that can be provided for a given local per-student spend. Systems can achieve economies of scale through coordinated “offers”. For instance, the decision to allow schools to offer T-levels may mean that in some subject areas student numbers will be too thinly spread to make it viable for anyone in a locality to offer some routes/pathways.

When it comes to adult learning, different logics apply. There are two strands of activity. One covers individuals learning for fun, or to move to better jobs. This can be left to individual choice in a national marketplace, providing that prospective students can access independent, top-quality labour market information and information advice

and guidance on courses and what they might lead to. Sadly, we still have country miles to go to reach this position.

“London has a larger population than many EU member states”

The other strand of activity is adult workforce upskilling and re-skilling, workplace innovation and business improvement. This is usually linked, in the rest of the UK and the developed world, to local economic development activity, and as the combined authorities (see Greater Manchester) are showing, these are in turn inextricably linked to local transport, infrastructure, regeneration and inclusive growth agendas.

This type of activity is remarkably hard to plan, design and deliver by central government alone, and with “levelling up” liable to be a central driver of policy, we can expect to see more rather than less emphasis upon this kind of joined-up policy package.

The response from colleges has been positive. The rise of the West Midlands FE Skills & Productivity Group and the Greater Manchester Colleges Group represent useful attempts to construct a joined-up offer to the local combined authority.

Colleges have realised that speaking with a single voice can help ensure that what they have to say gets heard, and that local cooperation and coordination beats cut-throat competition.

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Bulletin



Emma Fielding

Principal,
Richard Huish College

Start date September 2020

Previous job

Deputy principal, Richard Huish College

Interesting fact

She has a Master's degree in a Russian Studies and has taken hundreds of young people on historical trips to St Petersburg during her career

Movers & Shakers

...

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



John Abbott

Chief executive, The Richard
Huish Education Group

Start date September 2020

Previous job

Principal, Richard Huish College

Interesting fact

He is a qualified sport psychologist



Richard Bryant

Deputy principal for
finance and resources,
Fareham College

Start date January 2020

Previous job

Vice principal for finance and resources,
City College Southampton

Interesting fact

He once represented England Schools at an international volleyball tournament in Holland



Jacqui Canton

Principal, Abingdon
and Witney College

Start date September 2020

Previous job

Deputy principal, Abingdon and Witney College

Interesting fact

She used to play cricket for the East Midlands



Gillian Keegan

Parliamentary under-secretary
of state for apprenticeships and
skills, Department for Education

Start date February 2020

Concurrent job

MP for Chichester

Interesting fact

She started work as an apprentice at Delco Electronics, a subsidiary of General Motors in Kirkby, aged 16

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Organise your college's recruitment advertising with packages available at FE Week and Education Week Jobs.



www.educationweekjobs.co.uk

FE Week Sudoku challenge

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

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

Solutions: See right

Spot the difference To WIN an FE Week mug



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



Last Edition's winner: Ian Taylor

Solutions

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

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