

**HELP! : 'PROVIDERS
RUNNING OUT OF
CASH FAIRLY RAPIDLY'**



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**JOIN US! : WE ARE
LAUNCHING FOOD-
BANK FRIDAY**



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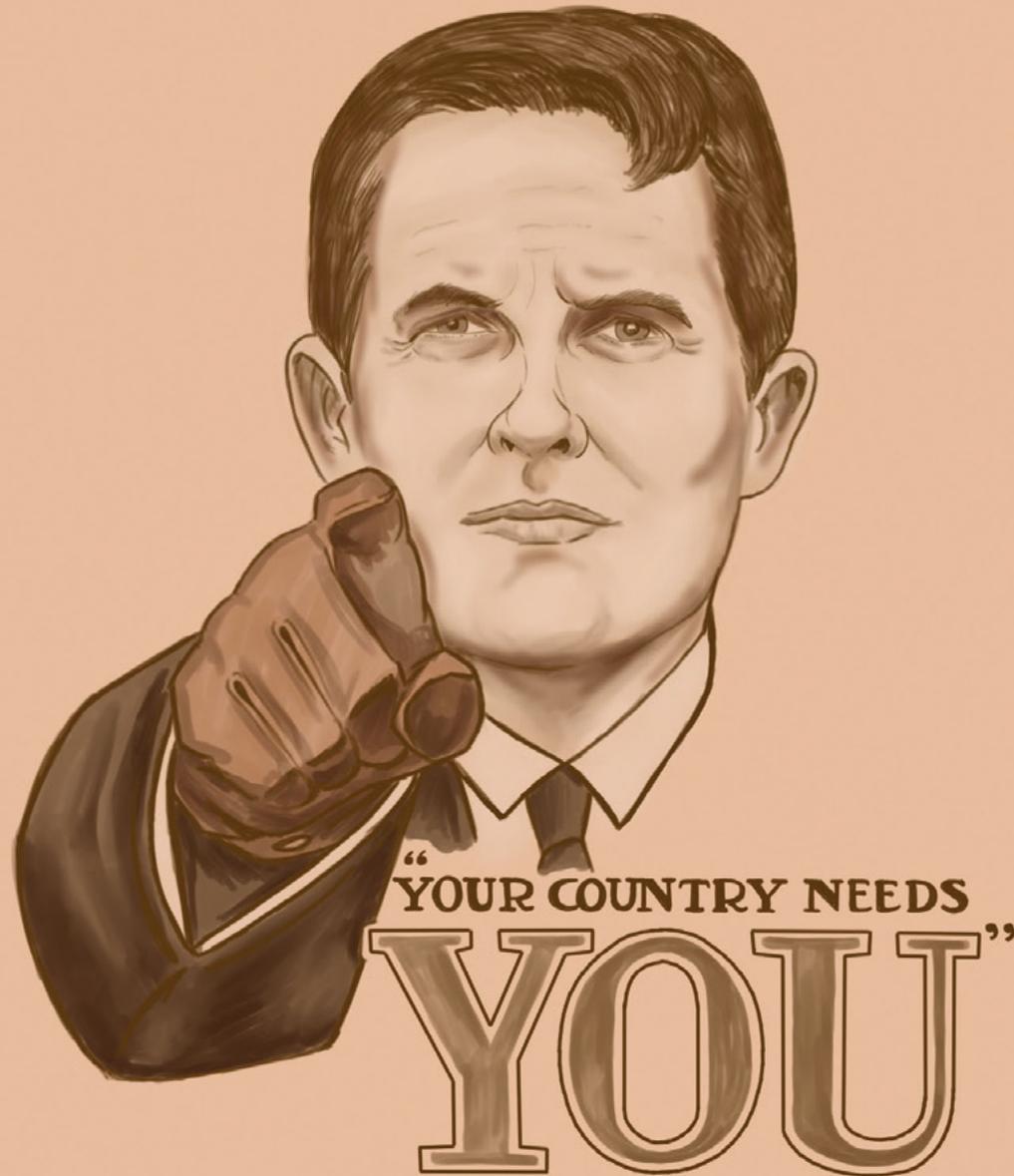
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FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2020
EDITION 311

COLLEGES



**Gavin Williamson:
'I am asking colleges
to be at the forefront
of our national
response to this crisis'**

**You will stay 'open
to children of key
workers and to
vulnerable children
during the Easter
holidays'**

**'You will be directly
saving people's lives'**

**Coronavirus law
includes powers to
'require educational
institutions to
stay open'**

See pages 6, 7, 8 & 10

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Profile: John Clarke: Principal, Southport College

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As Covid-19 lock-down looms, we must be there for one another **Page 10**



Gowland comes out of retirement to be temp boss at London college **Page 14**

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'Inadequate' KPMG kicked out of apprenticeships market

BILLY CAMDEN

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One of the 'big four' accounting firms that trains nearly 1,000 civil service apprentices has been banned from the apprenticeships market following a damning Ofsted inspection.

KPMG Limited Liability Partnership was rated 'inadequate' in a report published on Tuesday.

A catalogues of issues, including a lack of unbiased careers advice and poor support for high needs learners with dyslexia, were found for 933 apprentices who all work in government departments such as the Cabinet Office and Treasury.

They study a range of apprenticeship standards such as level 4 policy officer, cyber security technologist and professional accounting/taxation technician.

"Too few" of them "complete the programme, and many leave early", inspectors said.

"Many" report that they feel "demotivated by the lack of support and very slow response to their requests for information and guidance".

The apprentices' curriculum is "not well structured" and "does not support them to develop quickly the knowledge and skills they require", resulting in the "vast majority" being left behind.

Ofsted found that trainers are "not sure how well apprentices are doing, when they are going to achieve their apprenticeship, and what they need to do to achieve it".

KPMG works with two subcontractors, QA Limited and Bridgwater & Taunton College, which account for 58 per cent and eight per cent of apprentices respectively.

Ofsted criticised these partners as they "do not develop consistently well the necessary knowledge and skills". Leaders at KPMG have now taken over nearly all recruitment directly from the subcontractors as a result.

The watchdog's report continues: "Apprentices do not consistently receive the hours away from work that they need to study or attend classes."

Nor do they receive unbiased careers advice. When it does take place, it focuses on the career route within the civil service and does not guide apprentices to understand what is available to them outside of their current employer.

Leaders have "not responded quickly enough to support apprentices who have fallen behind or who have difficulties with their learning".

For example, an apprentice with dyslexia "did not receive the relevant level of support to help them overcome their difficulties with writing and sentence construction".

Leaders were praised for working "closely" with managers of civil service departments to create "an appropriate apprenticeship" curriculum to match their specific needs, for example to help apprentices acquire the skills to contribute to the development of new

policy and build up their financial literacy in the Treasury".

But while governors know well the areas for improvement, they have "not acted quickly enough to ensure leaders put in place the necessary remedial action so that apprentices make the progress that they should".

KPMG also had a further 134 apprentices who were on degree apprenticeships but were not in scope for this inspection as the higher levels are the responsibility of the Office for Students.

A Department for Education spokesperson said: "We are aware that KPMG's apprenticeship provision has been judged inadequate by Ofsted, and in line with our usual policy they will be removed from the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers.

"Our priority now is to minimise disruption to apprentices, government departments and employers. We are working closely with employers, to ensure all existing

apprentices can continue to access high-quality training and complete their apprenticeship."

They added that it will be each government department's responsibility to decide whether apprentices will complete their apprenticeships at KPMG or move to a different provider.

FE Week has asked a number of government departments if they will keep their existing apprentices with KPMG, but none would answer.

A KPMG UK spokesperson said: "We take both the quality and experience of the apprentices on this scheme very seriously and have a robust quality improvement plan in place to rapidly address the issues identified in this report."

A spokesperson for Bridgwater & Taunton College, which itself is rated 'good' by Ofsted, added: "We have reviewed the Ofsted report on KPMG apprenticeship delivery and, while disappointed in Ofsted's findings, we welcome the identification of specific improvements that will benefit apprentices and employers.

"We are committed to ensuring that learner outcomes meet and exceed expectations and we are working closely with KPMG to implement plans that respond to points raised in this report."

QA Limited declined comment.

Former ESFA boss to chair Student Loans Company

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Former Education & Skills Funding Agency chief executive Peter Lauener has been appointed as chair of the Student Loans Company (SLC).

The civil service veteran will take on the role alongside his other commitment as chair of both NCG – one of England's largest college groups – and the Construction Industry Training Board.

He was previously the interim chief executive of the SLC, a position he held from November 2017 to September 2018, following the sacking of Steve Lamey, who was investigated for his leadership conduct.

Lauener will earn £50,000 per year as chair of the SLC's board, for a time commitment of eight days per month. His three-year term will get under way from April 1, 2020.

"I am delighted to once again support the Student Loans Company," Lauener said.

"SLC plays a vital role in enabling

almost two million students each year to invest in their futures through higher and further education by providing trusted, transparent and accessible student finance services.

"I am particularly looking forward to reacquainting myself with colleagues from across the organisation, whose dedication to their roles enables SLC to deliver finance services for students, graduates and higher and further education institutions."

Universities minister Michelle Donelan said: "I am pleased to welcome Peter as the new chair of the Student Loans Company. His knowledge and experience of the sector means he is well placed to lead the organisation as it continues to provide its important services for students and graduates."

Lauener will take over the role from Andrew Wathey, who has held the position on an interim basis since February 1, 2020.

NCG receives funding from the SLC and confirmed that Lauener has declared this conflict of interest.

"Now that he has been appointed to SLC, he will also declare it as a

potential conflict of interest to NCG," a spokesperson told FE Week.

"Conflicts of interest are common in private and public sector work. What is important is to take practical steps to avoid any suggestion that decisions made are because of an interest which conflicts with an organisation's main purpose."

They added that if any conflicts of interest were to arise in practice, the "usual action would be for an individual with a conflict not to take part in Corporation discussions about the issue concerned".

As well as his other commitments, Lauener is a non-executive director at Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust, since September 2016. He was chief executive of the Institute for Apprenticeships for a brief period when it launched in 2017.

Before leading the ESFA, his career included the implementation of the Youth Training Scheme and of adult training when working for the Manpower Services Commission in the 1980s, plus the setting up of Training and Enterprise Councils in the 1990s.

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News

Shrewsbury considers legal bid to overturn Ofsted rating

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Exclusive

Ofsted have denied overruling their own inspectors following a college dispute that could end up in the courts.

Shrewsbury Colleges Group was rated 'inadequate' by the education watchdog in a contested report published on Monday which claimed that "not all students feel safe".

"Ofsted's processes were gravely flawed"

Mounting a robust defence, principal James Staniforth said he would be "appealing" against this "gravely flawed" inspection, and *FE Week* understands that legal action to overturn the grade is being considered.

Staniforth then went further and accused the Ofsted national team of "overruling" their regional colleagues.

"During the inspection process, important decisions relating to the evidence to be considered, findings and



publication made by the regional office had to be overruled by the national office," he said.

"We requested a delay in the publication of the report initially. This was refused at a regional level, but agreed at a national level.

"We requested the inspection be marked incomplete. This was refused at a regional level, but the national level determined that there were concerns regarding the credibility and reliability of the evidence base.

"We requested that once the college

was re-inspected safeguarding elements be considered. This was refused at a regional level but agreed at a national level."

Ofsted refutes allegations that they overruled their regional team.

"Our inspection reports speak for themselves. We do not accept the allegations made by Shrewsbury College," a spokesperson said.

Inspectors first identified alleged safeguarding concerns during a visit to the college, which teaches more than 9,000 students mostly aged 16 to 18, in November, but following a complaint they declared the inspection "incomplete".

Ofsted revisited Shrewsbury last week, but found that the same safety concerns persist.

While 'behaviours and attitudes' and 'leadership and management' have led to an overall 'inadequate' judgement, the rest of Shrewsbury's provision has been rated as 'good'.

The report said a "small number of vulnerable students described not feeling safe and feeling intimidated around the college".

And "some staff" reported that they "did not feel equipped to deal with challenges they may face when interacting with students and learners".

The Ofsted spokesperson said: "Our inspection handbook says that a college is likely to be judged to be inadequate if inspectors find that safeguarding is ineffective."

They added that in the case of Shrewsbury, inspectors found that

procedures were "not consistently well-implemented".

For example, adults were "able to walk around the sites with their identification unchallenged".

Staniforth said his college is "bitterly disappointed and extremely surprised that Ofsted have concluded that safeguarding processes at the college are not effective despite the wealth of evidence to the contrary".

"We will be appealing against the safeguarding grade of the report"

The college previously admitted that West Mercia Police were called to an incident during the original inspection in November, after a suspended student tried to regain entry to college, and that some fire call-points were disabled "in order to stop further false alarms" after a fault and a learner caused two separate false alarms.

Shrewsbury is also a national hotspot for county lines – described as the "network of drugs from urban areas into market towns".

Staniforth said the police have since written to him to say they have "no concerns" about his college.

A letter from West Mercia Police

superintendent Mo Lansdale to the principal, seen by *FE Week*, says: "We are aware there are active County Lines operating in Shrewsbury however we have no information or intelligence to suggest these are linked to Shrewsbury College."

Staniforth said that an independent review of safeguarding at the college, undertaken at the request of the Education and Skills Funding Agency, concluded "that 'campuses are safe places to learn, work and to visit', 'there is a strong culture of safeguarding', 'every effort has been made to ensure safe sites and safe students and staff' and the college is 'one of the safest in country'".

He continued: "The safeguarding grade is informed by 'a small number of students not feeling safe' and 'some staff reporting that they do not feel equipped to deal with challenges. This raises serious questions as to whether Ofsted requires 100% of students and staff to feel safe and confident respectively – a completely unrealistic expectation.

"The report raises the issue of 'access to campus sites' and 'potential' threats to students, not actual threats, the inference being that colleges like ours need to put up fences around all our sites. This in turn has major implications for FE estate management.

"We will be appealing against the safeguarding grade of the report on the grounds that Ofsted's processes in relation to this particular inspection were gravely flawed and unlike any that we have faced as an experienced senior team."



James Staniforth

FE Commissioner reveals how £80m rebuild and 'significant failures' put college's future at risk

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Poor forecasting and management of an £80 million investment in a new building put a college in "crisis mode" and its future at "significant risk", the FE Commissioner has found.

Richmond upon Thames College has been placed in supervised college status and it might now need to pursue a merger in order to survive.

In January, the college decided to withdraw from delivering T-levels to "prioritise the development" of its campus after being hit with a financial notice to improve.

The £80 million campus redevelopment is located moments away from Twickenham rugby stadium and includes a dedicated sixth form centre, a theatre, 3D prototyping laboratory and training restaurant.

Since September 2018, the college has gone through a "very turbulent period" in which the principal, vice principal for finance and enterprise, clerk and deputy principal have left and a new chair, head of governance and

two vice chairs have joined.

The FE Commissioner's team, whose report was published on Wednesday, did find that the leadership team had now been "significantly, albeit temporarily, stabilised" with the appointment of a number of experienced interims, and praised the new members for implementing a series of measures to change the college's approach.

Governors spoke of having been "in crisis mode for much of the last year and said they now looked forward to normalising and achieving revised ways of working".

Due to substantial advance capital grants and receipts from asset sales, the college currently has "exceptionally high levels" of restricted cash, and further short-term transfers from capital funds were anticipated because of the continuing operating losses in 2019/20.

Some of the funding for the campus redevelopment was based on a "substantial" grant from the Greater London Authority, which had only been notified on the college's financial position at the time of the inspection

and triggered "a number of questions and concerns".

Moreover, accurate timetabling and rooming was also "urgently required" to manage the decant to the new build, according to the report.

It claimed staff were hopeful that the capital project would address long-standing problems with the condition of the estate and out-dated IT facilities, but said they also expressed "considerable concern" about the overall scheme and the imminent decant – few felt confident that this had been sufficiently planned.

The FE Commissioner's team found that budgetary control issues had emerged since May 2019, coupled with increasing concerns about the underlying cash position and losses on core college provision.

It was reported that college financial turnover has halved over the last seven years, in part due to a decision to open new school sixth forms in all the secondary schools in the borough.

Despite not having any commercial loans, the FE Commissioner expects the college's financial health to decline from satisfactory in 2017/18 to

inadequate, though the team also noted "serious shortcomings in financial management and control during 2018/19 have meant that the full extent of financial underperformance is only now being fully identified".

The original budget and financial plan submitted to ESFA in August 2019 was criticised for falling "well short of acceptable standards" and revisions were requested.

The college's draft financial statements also indicated a significant operating loss while pay costs and depreciation charges were found to be over budget.

Richmond Upon Thames recorded a £6.2 million deficit in 2018/19.

A structure and prospects appraisal to "identify options for structural change including merger" is now planned, for implementation by December 2020.

In a letter to the college's chair, Nick Deeming, following the FE Commissioner's visit, apprenticeships and skills minister Gillian Keegan said: "The FE Commissioner reports that significant failures in the college's financial management and control

have resulted in the college operating under serious financial pressure.

"In the context of the increasing financial commitments required by the ongoing campus redevelopment project, I am greatly concerned that this presents significant risks to the college's working capital and its future sustainability."

A spokesperson for the college said: "This report dates back to October last year and good progress has been made in implementing the recommendations across the last five months.

"Since the time of the FE Commissioner report the college has secured the in-year funding and the necessary reductions in staffing are on track for completion.

"Furthermore, the funding of the capital project has been resolved, with a fully funded budget."

They added that chair Nick Deeming has this week stepped down. He has been replaced by Department for Education civil servant Ian Valvona, who was also the last chair of Kensington and Chelsea College before it merged last month with Morley College.



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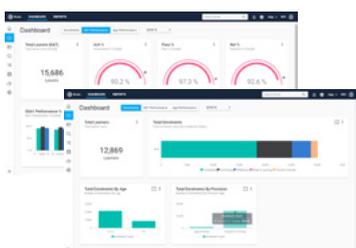
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News

Coronavirus: impact from the fro

'Lifesaving' colleges ordered to stay open indefinitely

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Colleges will have to keep campuses open to vulnerable children and those of "key workers" indefinitely, including during the holidays, while most people go on an unprecedented nationwide shutdown.

On Wednesday, education secretary Gavin Williamson called on providers to be on the forefront of the country's response to the coronavirus crisis, insisting they will be "directly saving people's lives".

Emergency legislation, the Coronavirus Bill, will go through Parliament next week and allow the government to force colleges and schools to stay open or "relax some requirements around education legislation in order to help these institutions run effectively during the event of an emergency".

It means that while college doors will be closed and classes migrated online for most students from Friday

afternoon until "further notice", they will remain open to those that need them most, including during the upcoming two-week end-of-term break.

The government had not provided definitions of "key workers" or vulnerable children at the time of going to press.

The health minister Matt Hancock did, however, say on BBC Question Time that it "will include NHS staff, those in social care and those who are working on the supply of medical devices".

But when asked if people who work in supermarkets would be defined as key workers, Hancock said: "The list will be published tomorrow. We know we have got to get it out tomorrow."

Prime minister Boris Johnson told his daily press briefing on Thursday evening that "we can turn the tide within the next 12 weeks and I am absolutely confident that we can send coronavirus packing in this country, but only if we all take the steps which we have outlined".

But when asked what "turn the tide" actually meant, Johnson said: "I cannot stand here and tell you that by the end of June that we will be on a downward slope."

"It is possible but I simply cannot say that is for certain. Of course not. We don't know where we are. We don't know how long this thing will go on for."

Colleges could therefore very well see themselves working under this "new operational model" until the next academic year, in August or September.

East Coast College principal Stuart Rimmer told FE Week it is "time for colleges where possible to step forward for communities".

His college has taken steps to work with local food banks, offered kitchens to provide hot meals for local vulnerable groups with the local councils and is working with the hospital trusts to get students rapidly ready to step into jobs to support vacancies or shortages.

He said they are also preparing

telephone support and online courses for "day one redundancies with employers and the Department for Work and Pensions".

Counselling service support has also been "ramped up" for students and staff.

"We intend to continue working face to face on reduced timetables with vulnerable learner groups who need us more than ever," Rimmer continued.

"The college intends not to be closed but to migrate our college community online. We remain at the service of our community. It is important that clear, unambiguous and direct advice to colleges in post-16 sector is provided urgently by government around educational health and care plan students."

Writing for FE Week (page 8) about his college's approach to life off campus, the principal of Lancashire-based Cardinal Newman College, Nick Burnham, said: "Teaching and learning online begins for students from Monday using Microsoft Teams and will be a mix of live sessions and pre-recorded or set work."

"All will follow the existing college timetable, hopefully motivated by the thought their teacher will have a significant input to their final grade."

"The college's 'achievement tutors' will work from home, regularly

making contact with vulnerable students but also supporting all students through this difficult time."

He added that counselling will continue via Skype.

On Thursday, the Department for Education published guidance on how schools can continue to claim free school meals during the country's lockdown.

They were told to work with catering providers or local authorities to provide food parcels or send out supermarket vouchers to eligible pupils.

The average college has "several hundred" 16 to 18 students who receive free meals, according to the Association of Colleges.

The DfE told FE Week it does plan to provide free meals support to post-16 providers, but the arrangements had not been finalised at the time of going to press.

In a letter sent to Williamson this week, AoC boss David Hughes warned that an average college could lose up to £1 million per month of temporary closure and "very few, if any, will be able to cope without government support".

The government had made no announcement on what, if any, financial support there will be for colleges during this crisis at the time of going to press.

College group launches Food Bank Friday

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A large college group in London is launching "Food Bank Friday" in an effort to combat food shortages for the most vulnerable people across the capital.

Panic shoppers in England have emptied supermarket shelves and hoarded goods amid the Covid-19 outbreak and food banks that rely on donations have been left struggling to stay open, according to reports.

In response, staff across London and South East Education Group's 16 sites, which includes colleges and schools, will today (March 20) bring an item of food to be donated to local food banks.

It will be the last day that many of the group's staff are in the classroom before it switches to mainly remote and digital teaching.

Chief executive Sam Parrett told FE



Week that at this "very uncertain and difficult time, we want to support all our communities".

"Coronavirus is already having a hugely negative economic and social impact across the region and it's vital that we all pull together and help one another as much as possible," she said.

"For this reason we are launching Food Bank Friday tomorrow. It will be the last day in the office or classroom for the majority of our staff and we are asking them to all bring an item

or two to donate to local food banks, which are struggling with very limited donations at the moment."

Parrett added that her group would "love to see" this initiative being replicated by other FE colleges and schools around the country.

"We all need a bit of positivity at the moment and one thing that has been wonderful to see across our organisation is the community spirit and willingness of people to help those less fortunate."

Apprentice assess

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A leading apprentice assessment organisation has told FE Week they are already experiencing "significant cancellations" following the coronavirus outbreak.

A spokesperson for Highfield Group, one of the busiest end-point assessment organisations (EPAO) that is approved for 38 apprenticeship standards, said the cancellations were mainly as a result of employers restricting site access to visitors, as well as apprentices being redirected to frontline activities during the current situation.

Mark Dawe, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, claimed that "a significant proportion" of EPAs

would not happen without dropping face-to-face assessments, and said that there had been thousands of cancellations already, in a letter to members on Thursday.

He called on the government to drop end-point observations and replace them with "technical discussions" to allow apprentices to achieve their programme.

While some assessments can and are being conducted online and remotely, some have warned that this will not be possible in many cases.

At the time of going to press an announcement on apprenticeship assessment flexibilities appeared imminent.

The FE and skills minister Gillian Keegan told FE Week: "We are continuing to work closely with the sector to work through a range of

Front-line of the FE and skills sector

Apprenticeship providers desperate for government support as starts plummet

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England's largest apprenticeship providers have told FE Week that starts are "falling off a cliff" and redundancies are likely to follow.

According to many of the providers we spoke to, they are becoming increasingly desperate for the government to provide information on what, if any, financial support they will receive in response to the coronavirus crisis.

Liz Bromley, the chief executive of one of England's largest college groups, NCG, said announcements by education ministers that they expected providers to close their doors and move to online learning for most students after this week will "inevitably impact on our colleges' apprenticeship delivery for an uncertain period into the future".

"Across our colleges we are seeing recruitment of new starters stall, as many of our employer partners observe guidance on social distancing, and have

concerns about their financial health.

"We have already seen a number of apprentices (four in 48 hours) being made redundant across the construction and event management sectors."

All NCG's face-to-face learning at its seven colleges has been transferred online for its students and apprentices, and they have put workplace assessment by in-house assessors on hold.

"There is no doubt that this will impact on apprentices' timely completion of their programmes and may well significantly reduce our income over time.

So financial support "will be needed," she continued, "to protect the capacity of providers into the future, to maintain the confidence of employers, and to enable the apprenticeship market to grow in strength again."

A college on the south coast, which did not want to be identified, has said the impact on their apprenticeship provision had been "immediate" and they have "well over 100 potential starts at serious immediate threat".

Other employers they work with, like



those in the aviation supply chain, have been quick to act in pausing or even cancelling recruitment.

Private provider Qube Learning said while they had seen a reduction in new enrolments, by working closely with their employers to offer online solutions they had managed to limit the damage.

But, a spokesperson said, there needs to be "some sort of profile payment support measures put in place to

help providers through this period of uncertainty".

Another provider, which wished to stay anonymous, warned they would have to consider staff redundancies if learner numbers fall off as they predict they will, after around 200 took breaks in learning already.

They said "the clock is very much ticking" for government support for the sector, but even if the support is not yet

coming, confirmation it is on its way would mean providers "can plan with a bit of certainty about the future".

The warnings come after Association of Employment and Learning Providers chief executive Mark Dawe called on the government to guarantee providers' income from non-levy contracts, the European Social Fund, sub-contracts and adult education budgets, and for rules around that funding to be relaxed.

One provider reported that while they had yet to see employers pause their training programmes, small businesses had already, in effect, stopped paying their co-investment fee, which is what non-levy payers contribute towards training when they recruit an apprentice.

They added that even if government announced support measures, "it will probably be too late already for some redundancies to not happen, because the impact is already being felt during this month".

They chastised the Department for Education and the Education and Skills Funding Agency for "remaining very quiet" and for "no real messaging going out".

At the time FE Week went to press, the government had yet to publish any guidance on how providers will be funded and what help they will be receiving as the UK grapples with coronavirus.

Government organisation hit by 'significant cancellations'

areas that have been raised in order to provide clarity and certainty.

"I would like to thank everyone for their continued support and cooperation during these challenging times and we will provide an update as soon as we possibly can."

FE Week spoke to a number of EPAOs to find out what impact the pandemic has already been having.

Charlotte Bosworth, managing director of Innovate Awarding, which is approved for 39 different standards, told FE Week 80 per cent of their planned assessments had been cancelled this week.

She said remote assessment was proving "very difficult" in many cases and called for the announcement of a similar policy on apprenticeship exams as there has been on GCSEs and A-levels, where planned summer exams will no longer be going ahead

but students will still receive their qualifications.

"Learners who have demonstrated sufficient competence through the knowledge, skills and behaviour during the programme, and are able to successfully complete their gateway conversations, should be put forward to EPAOs who would ratify this decision through professional discussions on the telephone," Bosworth continued.

Jamie Holland, EPA commercial and planning manager at City & Guilds, said the organisation had experienced "minimal changes" to the way it works with EPAOs at this point in time.

"However, we do expect this to change over coming weeks, with more EPAOs to be completed remotely and some potential cancellations," he added.

Holland stated that "many" of the more than 50 standards for which City & Guilds completes EPAs have on-line functionality already. But he also acknowledged that many other standards would not be able to operate observations remotely.

"In these challenging times, we would hope that IfATE would be able to allow all parties to utilise professional discussions in the place of technical observations, so that the knowledge, skills and behaviours are still assessed, albeit through an alternative method to that stated in the assessment plan."

Similarly, a spokesperson for NCFE claimed employers and providers had not wanted to cancel EPAs over the last two weeks.

But in anticipation of cancellations, the EPAO has been expanding digital assessment

options and implementing options which could be undertaken from apprentices' home environments, in attempts to keep EPAs on track.

The spokesperson added: "We are currently in discussions with the DfE, IfATE, Ofqual and other regulators to identify a viable suitable alternative to face-to-face observation, which is the only assessment method we are currently unable to offer.

"We have proposed a number of options to our regulators which would allow apprentices to complete all components of their assessment."

A spokesperson for the Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education told FE Week: "We are working on a package of measures with the Department that will assist providers, EPAOs to



Charlotte Bosworth

respond to these exceptional new circumstances, while protecting the interests of apprentices and maintaining quality."

News

NICK BURNHAM

Principal, Cardinal Newman College



A principal's day of shock, some relief and a poignant note to end on

The need to act on government's decision is tempered by concern for our students, writes college principal and the chair of the Sixth Form Colleges Association, Nick Burnham

On Wednesday night I watched the secretary of state announce the closure of schools and colleges and then emailed staff to say that Thursday would be our last day with our Year 13 students. During the day we had closed to Year 12 as our staff, slowly and reluctantly, started to self-isolate. To be honest I was relieved to make the decision and some of the pressure that had increased over the last 10 days was lifted.

Along with many principals and heads across the country, I had wrestled with the desire to stay open and serve our students while knowing some vulnerable staff and students would not self-isolate independently

without my acting and closing the college. I still need more clarity about which students are expected to attend on Monday before I can make plans for

“To be honest I was relieved to make the decision”

next week. Although dependants of key workers, some students are 17 or even 18 years old and may be better off at home than in college.

This morning started with worried Y13 students at reception at 7:45 asking about their exams and grades. I did my best to reassure them and said that the most sensible way forward would be to move to a system of teacher-

awarded grades using the college's past performance as a guide. 'They will do the most sensible thing, won't they?' was the last question I dealt with rather less well than the others.

After a college leadership team briefing, we worked on finalising the list of vulnerable students including those with an EHCP and discussed support for our foundation learning students. As a post-16, predominantly A level provider, it was not usual for us to think in terms of providing supervision for students to help parents. We established there are likely to be few key workers among the parents of our foundation learning department and therefore concluded that on-site supervision was not required.

So from tomorrow our support for all students begins. The college will be open, staffed by SLT and the estates team from 9:30 to 12:30 every weekday. Teaching and learning online begins

on Monday morning for all students using Microsoft Teams and will be a mix of live sessions and pre-recorded or set work. All will follow the existing college timetable, hopefully motivated by the thought their teacher will have a significant input to their final grade. The college's achievement tutors will

“The silver lining has been the magnificent response of college staff”

work from home, regularly making contact with vulnerable students but also supporting all students through this difficult time. Counselling continues by Skype or other methods

and our additional learning support department will be in regular contact with all EHCP students to check how they are adjusting to this new approach.

All day there has been an unusual sadness around the place as shocked students came to terms with leaving college before their time. Staff and students have shed tears and tried to make sense of things. The one silver lining has been the magnificent response of the college staff. One unexpected event ended the day poignantly for us all. Eileen, our receptionist of 28 years, had talked of retirement but not yet requested it. She realised that today was actually, unexpectedly, going to be her last day after all those years. We ended a sad day with staff outside the main entrance, appropriately socially distanced, applauding her on her way home.

EDITORIAL

In the absence of official 'clarity and certainty' – what does the FE sector know tonight?



In an effort to win the war against Covid-19, colleges and schools will need to remain open on Monday for vulnerable children and the children of key workers.

But simultaneously open for some and closed for others for how long? Today the prime minister, Boris Johnson, talked of 12 weeks but admitted he “cannot stand here and tell you that by the end of June that we will be on a downward slope. It is possible but I simply cannot say that is for certain. Of course not. We don't know where we are. We don't know how long this thing will go on for.”

Summer exams have already been called off, so it seems highly likely the

majority of learners will not return to college until September at the earliest.

College and school leaders are already wrestling with the unprecedented challenge of keeping the doors open for a minority of learners, but which ones?

Tomorrow, the government has promised to publish the types of young learners that must be catered for on campus as “vulnerable”. Looking at current ESFA definitions it seems highly likely this will include as a minimum all those aged 16 to 24 with an Education Health and Care (EHC) plan.

Less clear, is who will be defined by the government

as key workers and whether their children would need to attend school or college if under the age of 18.

Again, the government promises answers tomorrow.

And keeping campuses open through the Easter and summer holiday will also come at a substantial cost.

As one ESFA official put it: “We recognise that colleges and other providers may incur additional costs as a result of responding to covid-19, for example where colleges open over the Easter holidays. We are looking to put in place a process for providing re-imbursment for those costs.”

Also being worked on is an “urgent package of financial mitigations for providers”.

In an email to a training provider today, one the ESFA official also said: “We recognise that there will be a substantial overall financial impact to colleges and other providers from covid-19 and that for some this will be rapid and severe.

“We are seeking to put in place a range of measures looking at both flexibilities around funding and processes for emergency funding and intend to set out further details shortly.”

And tonight the skills minister, Gillian Keegan, told FE Week: “We are

continuing to work closely with the sector to work through a range of areas that have been raised in order to provide clarity and certainty.

“I would like to thank everyone for their continued support and cooperation during these challenging times and we will provide an update as soon as we possibly can.”

So, financial support is coming and those in the FE and skills sector will need to all work together to ensure that when it does, it makes the most positive difference.

Nick Linford, Editor
news@feweek.co.uk



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Experts

RUTH SPARKES

Managing director,
EMPRA



Be clear, be informative, be approachable

We owe our staff, students and other stakeholders good leadership – but remember to show a human face as well

If there's one word that sums up the challenge facing educational institutions in the current environment it's uncertainty. There's a lot of it around and a lack of clarity makes it hard to know what is the best action to take.

At this time, the most important thing that will reduce uncertainty is good communication. Students, parents, staff and other stakeholders are looking for leadership from your institution on how the emerging situation affects them.

More importantly, they want a human response. Think about those with concerns or who will be anxious, or disappointed. How does the 15-year-old teenager feel when they realise they have unwittingly left school for the last time?

In my work across different education sectors (primary, secondary, FE and HE), I've been offering support

and developing plans for this situation over a few weeks now. The following are my five key steps to help your communications reduce uncertainty.

1. Be clear and truthful – choose your words carefully

People need to hear a clear message, using a few carefully chosen words.

For example, state that your site, campus or office is closed to everyone for the foreseeable future. Detail any exceptions, provide contact details and explain alternative ways that support or services can be accessed.

The purpose is to avoid students or staff turning up in person. Consider how humiliating it would be for already anxious students to arrive at a locked building because they didn't understand the clever phrase you'd come up with.

Captain 'Sully' Sullenberger was genius at this. You'll remember he was the pilot who landed his Airbus A320 in New York's Hudson River. His message to 155 passengers was clear and simple:

"This is the Captain. Brace for impact."

Explaining this choice of words in a Tweet, he said: "I wanted to sound confident because I knew courage can be contagious. In our aviation vocabulary there are certain single words that are rich with meaning. 'Brace' is such a word. And I chose the word 'impact' to give passengers and crew alike a vivid image of what to expect."

2. Be accessible, be visible

The worst thing that an institution can do is to appear to be hiding from those who need support. You may not be able to resolve all of their concerns, but by being accessible and visible, you provide a human contact, which in itself is reassuring. That may be through email or other digital channels, answering the phone or in person. Take the time to listen to concerns, show empathy and ensure those you talk with feel informed and involved.

3. Keep communicating

Planned, regular communication is really important. Let your stakeholders know what information they can expect and when. Include a date and time when publishing or circulating information. Things are changing rapidly so share up-to-date information, and ensure anyone reading it knows when it was updated.

Your choice of communication channels (email, text, Messenger, social media, website, telephone or post) should depend on your audience. Don't make assumptions. According to the UK Office of National Statistics one in eight 11-18 year olds can only access the internet at home using a mobile phone – and a large number of others have no way of getting online at home.

4. Keep yourself and others updated

Curate relevant information for your audiences. Bournemouth & Poole College does this with a dedicated

COVID-19 page on its website. It provides links to official government and health websites plus FAQs for complex information. Chunking information into easily digestible segments makes relevant information quick and easy to find.

5. Keep the media close

Understandably, COVID-19 is currently the only story in town and journalists are looking for every angle to cover it.

- Check that emails or texts couldn't be misconstrued if leaked to the media.
- Watch out for potential disgruntled parents or students, as the press like such stories.
- Remind staff of who to contact should there be any media enquiries and of relevant policies on media relations.
- Engage positively (when possible) if contacted by the media – they can be valuable when you're trying to engage your community.

TOM BEWICK

Chief executive, the Federation
of Awarding Bodies



As Covid-19 lock-down looms, we must be there for one another

In the face of the global pandemic, there is a great deal for the UK's awarding industry to be proud of, writes Tom Bewick

Awarding organisations and end-point assessment organisations have been hit badly by coronavirus. Our bread and butter, as thriving knowledge-based organisations, are about serving the qualifications and assessment needs of thousands of learners and apprentices in both the UK and overseas.

Without general qualifications, such as GCSEs and A-Levels, young people and adults would struggle to progress in their lives. And without applied generals, apprenticeships, vocational awards and other types of work-based end-point assessments, whole sectors of the economy would grind to halt. In short, our work is all about providing the supply of

occupationally competent people for a complex workforce.

“We have been working in lockstep with the key statutory agencies”

A shut-down of the active labour market is what is now unfolding. Which is why this is such an unprecedented crisis. It has huge ramifications for the entire education and skills sector. Even during the Blitz the government managed to keep the schools open. People went to work. In the long history of national summer examinations, the government has never felt the

compulsion to cancel them.

Since the crisis of Covid-19 first broke, the Federation of Awarding Bodies has been forced into non-stop contingency planning mode. Every single aspect of the AO and EPAO ecosystem is being ripped up as we think about mitigating ways in which we can keep the show on the road.

This is proving very difficult. Our industry is renowned for being both high-tech and high-touch. People – learners and employers – are at the heart of everything we do.

I'm proud of the way our industry has stepped up to the challenge. The CEOs of awarding bodies and EPAOs have dropped everything to help guide government officials with understanding the front-line impact of coronavirus. FAB and many of my colleagues have been working in lockstep with the key statutory agencies to produce comprehensive

guidance on everything from special dispensations for learners who are forced to take a break in their apprenticeships, to how to conduct a valid end-point assessment remotely.

“We have set up a Covid-19 web page with a dedicated webinar”

People working in the sector are looking to their peak-level representative bodies like never before to represent and support them. At FAB we have set up a dedicated COVID-19 web page for AOs and EPAOs to access all the up-to-date information they

will need. This will include dedicated webinar and linking all responsible officers with FAB, via WhatsApp.

We are bringing forward our pre-existing plans of becoming a best-in-class digital trade association by moving all of our training programmes and events online over the coming weeks. As a virtual organisation our staff already work mainly from home. We've invested in smart teleworking technology like HiHi2, which gives us a streamlined and integrated way of communicating across our business. It also means we can do some morale boosting things like coffee catch-ups on video and sharing stories about a menagerie of pets (mainly cats).

As the total lock-down of our society looms, now, more than ever, is the time to promote a real sense of community and to be there for one another.



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Profile

Introducing...

JOHN CLARKE

Principal,
Southport CollegeJESS STAUFENBERG
@STAUFENBERGJ**FE Week meets a principal whose career has been defined by quiet consistency, and who has a few parting words for the sector's leaders**

It was a college principal who suggested I go and interview John Clarke, the retiring boss at Southport College in Merseyside and FE career veteran of 35 years. I'd asked for suggestions for interviewees, prompting the tongue-in-cheek response that Clarke was "worth celebrating" since he'd managed to "leave FE without a scandal – how many can say that?", winky emoji face, etc. I was intrigued.

Speaking to Clarke, who confesses to keeping his "head below the parapet" during his career, it becomes clear why his record is both well-respected and super-clean – the man strikes you as especially modest. Despite years on leadership teams, there's not a whiff of authoritarianism about him and, as it turns out, a dislike of overly hierarchical and rule-bound environments is a

defining part of his personal character and professional motivation. In fact, an aversion to the same almost kept him out of FE altogether.

“Community development was recognised as a profession. That has gone by the board now”

It was 1981 and Clarke was doing well. He'd just completed a PGCE specialising in adult literacy at the University of Leicester after three years as a community arts worker in Liverpool. But Clarke's trainee experience in colleges, following the creative, grassroots engagement he was used to, left him cold. "I decided I'd never work in an FE college in my life. They were too stuffy, too bureaucratic. The staff room was dominated by filing cabinets and people didn't seem to speak to each other. The culture put me off. I swore

I wouldn't." He quickly follows this up by saying that perception was probably his own fault, being young and unused to paperwork. But on one point he remains firm. "It was massively overregulated."

Clarke himself had had a fairly free existence, born in Ripon in Yorkshire to a father in the RAF, before settling with his parents and younger sister in north London. His father re-trained as a civil servant

and his mother was a housewife. "I grew up in a settled, middle-class existence." A clear memory sticks out from primary school. "One day we were escorted to the gym but I don't think we were told what we were doing. We took a test and I think we might have been the last year that did the 11-plus."

At first the young Clarke didn't find friends at Watford Grammar School For Boys, which he describes as "setting itself up like a public school" with the teachers all in gowns. But by sixth form he was enjoying himself and won a place to read history at Churchill College, Cambridge – a college set up to take in state-educated children. "I was overawed that I was mixing with a lot of people from public school. What struck me was their confidence in themselves." It was there that he heard about a scheme in Liverpool working with disadvantaged young people and adults. On his final day at Cambridge, Clarke didn't look back.

"It was almost literally the day after I graduated. I didn't go home. I got on



1st year at Watford Grammar School, 1966

the coach up to Liverpool." He had a job in arts engagement on the local authority's "community council", a long-gone late-70s Labour Party initiative. "It was when community development was still recognised as a profession. All that has gone by the board now."

Clarke's speech picks up speed as he describes with quiet passion the three years he says had a "massive influence on me, in terms of my thinking in further education". Nearby Toxteth had one of the highest unemployment rates in the country and riots broke out shortly after Clarke left. "I'd studied history and sociology, and I arrived on this estate where virtually no one had gone to university. But I very quickly realised I was mixing with people as intelligent and able as the students I'd mixed with at university and from public schools. That sounds like a strange thing to realise, as obviously I understood the concept of disadvantage, but it was such a stark thing."

Trying to provide better

opportunities has driven Clarke ever since, using the style he learnt on the community council – "engage and involve people, allow them to shape some of what they're doing".

Still he stayed away from colleges, doing his PGCE but becoming an area youth worker in Oxford for four years, instead of becoming a lecturer. Eventually, he inched a bit closer to them. He took a job running a community education centre at Bolton College in Greater Manchester – almost, but not fully, inside the machinery of the FE sector. "It was a halfway house," he laughs. "One of the big motivating factors for people, if you leave aside monetary rewards, is having control over what you do and freedom to take responsibility. Because I was working at the community end of things at Bolton, I did have some freedom, so that was good."



Pictured with Swedish partner(s) in an educational transnational European project led by Bolton Community Educational Service, 1996



**“Someone,
somewhere, has
to simplify the
regulation in FE”**



Then incorporation of further education colleges arrived in 1993. Bolton College was removed from the local authority but councillors weren't keen to lose the community education centre. "The council was very proud of it, and they decided they didn't want it to go with the college. We thrived in the 90s." Clarke led on European projects looking at adult education abroad and also helped set up a higher education access course at his centre. Bolton College, meanwhile, "hit the financial buffers". By the end of the decade David Collins, who later became the FE commissioner and was then head of South Cheshire College, was brought in to save the situation. The first of two significant mergers in Clarke's life was about to begin.

"He had a plan to bring the local sixth-form college and community education into the FE college." The sixth-form college never joined, but

Clarke soon found himself on the top team at the college as quality manager and then director of adult and community services. "I suppose it was the two or three hardest years of my life, because you were trying to turn around a college with big problems. But it worked." It also brought to an end a division Clarke had always had concerns about – the separation of adult education from 16-19 further education. They belong together, he says.

It is perhaps ironic that the college in which Clarke found the greatest inspiration was run by a hierarchical and brilliant leader, John Smith at Burnley College in Lancashire. Here, as assistant principal under Smith, rules took on their proper meaning for Clarke. "I had huge respect for John. Personality-wise he was very resolute, he took no prisoners, and he was hugely driven. It was very hierarchical in lots

of ways, it was very structured. But ultimately his view was, you have to give people the freedom to move on from the structures so they have the space to implement their own ideas. He had a saying: 'You can manage people to be good, but they have to want to become excellent!'"

“More than schools and universities, we are subject to a plethora of regulation”

It was Smith who encouraged Clarke to apply for principal at Southport College. He has led it for almost nine years, and is currently handing the

reins over to new college principal, Michelle Brabner. The college's most recent Ofsted came out this Wednesday, with glowing references in particular to the merger Clarke spearheaded with the local sixth-form provision, the King George V College. The report reveals Clarke's steady hand: "managers have introduced a more rigorous approach", "senior leaders have made significant progress", and more. But Clarke clearly sees the overall 'good' grade, which both establishments had already, as a modest achievement. Twice he mentions that he regrets not taking the college to 'outstanding' for the community, like his most admired mentor. He notes without a sense of martyrdom the huge effort required by a merger: "It might be the right thing to do morally, educationally and business-wise, but it probably distracted us for a year."

For someone who has achieved so

much, and worked so hard for others, Clarke is seriously unboastful about those facts. He says he has changed his view from that held in his youth, when he was "naïve to think I could make a difference to whole communities – I've scaled that down to making a difference to individuals."

But he holds one conviction which has only deepened throughout his years in FE. "We're still a massively overregulated sector." The other day Clarke's finance manager worked out that there are about 24 funding streams for colleges to struggle with. He presses his point home to me. "More than schools and universities, we are subject to a plethora of regulation. Someone, somewhere, has to simplify the regulation in FE."

The sector has been lucky to have this even-tempered (and scandal-free) person. Let's hope ministers listen to his parting words.

News

UTC turns the tables and comes to the aid of a MAT

FRASER WHIELDON
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A north-west England university technical college has become the latest of its type to move towards joining a multi-academy trust – but this time the tables have turned.

The leader of UTC Warrington, Lee Barber, has been appointed by the North West Academies Trust (NWAT) to be the interim headteacher of Rudheath Senior Academy, following the resignation of its second headteacher in as many years.

Rudheath, which teaches pupils aged 11 to 16, joined NWAT 18 months ago following a fire that burned down half the school, and its departure from University of Chester Academies Trust, which collapsed in 2018 after forecasting a £3 million deficit.

This marks a rare example of a successful UTC supporting a multi-academy trust (MAT) with a struggling school. MATs have traditionally come to the aid of at-risk UTCs in the past.

UTC Warrington, which teaches students aged 14 to 19 and specialises in science, engineering and cyber, is

rated 'good' by Ofsted.

Barber said, although Rudheath is also rated 'good' by Ofsted, it "has suffered significant turbulence, fallen on tough times and needs some strong leadership and management".

While discussing with NWAT the opportunity for UTC Warrington to join the trust, the idea of Barber working across both schools "seemed like an obvious start to a strong future partnership," he said.

While he splits his time between the two, the UTC's vice principal Amanda Downing has become associate principal and conducts the day-to-day running, though Barber insists he is still "proactively" involved at Warrington, and staff at both providers are supporting one another.

Barber says that as Rudheath's curriculum is very academically focused, the UTC is taking the opportunity to inject some technical education into its provision.

The school's students have gone to the UTC for engineering and construction taster days. There is even talk of the UTC delivering specialist GCSEs for Rudheath from September.

The boards of NWAT and the

academy will be discussing the UTC possibly joining the trust in the coming weeks and months, Barber said.

The chief executive of NWAT, Steve Docking, called this a "great opportunity" for both organisations to benefit from working together and sharing resources.

He also believes the partnership will strengthen their work ensuring "every student deserves the best possible education".

UTCs that have been brought into MATs following academic or financial difficulty include Sir Charles Kao UTC, which joined the Burnt Mill Academy Trust and rebranded itself the BMAT STEM Academy in May 2018.

After Ofsted slapped it with a grade 4 in its first-ever inspection, UTC Swindon joined the Activate Learning Education Trust in 2017, which also includes UTCs in Reading, Oxfordshire and at Heathrow.

UTC Bolton was told to join a MAT in March 2018 when it was issued with a notice to improve because the Education & Skills Funding Agency found it had "inadequate" financial controls. It was announced last month



UTC Warrington principal and Rudheath Senior Academy interim headteacher Lee Barber

UTC Bolton would be joining The Keys Federation MAT and renaming itself the University Collegiate School.

UTC founder and former education secretary Lord Baker has previously warned that UTCs would be "watered down" if they joined a MAT.

But in a U-turn last year, he and then-academies minister Lord Agnew

wrote to the principals and chairs of every UTC urging them to join a trust.

Speaking at a public accounts committee hearing on Monday, the Department for Education's permanent secretary Jonathan Slater said that around 30 UTCs will be part of a MAT in the next year. There are nearly 60 UTCs open in England.

Gowland comes out of retirement to be temp boss at London college

FRASER WHIELDON
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The principal of a London college has been replaced by a retired further education leader ahead of an FE Commissioner visit.

Waltham Forest College has told FE Week Joy Kettle stepped down with immediate effect in February after two years at the helm "due to personal circumstances", and former Newham College principal Di Gowland had replaced her on an interim basis.

This comes ahead of a diagnostic assessment by FE Commissioner Richard Atkins and after the college was placed in early intervention by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

In minutes from a board meeting held in November, Kettle told governors intervention was triggered by its financial health being rated as 'requires improvement', but also by Waltham Forest's cash position.

College accounts, which showed Waltham Forest generated a £482,000 deficit before tax in 2018-19, say it "remains

at risk from adverse short-term cash movements" and its cash flow dropped by £274,000 from 2017-18, to £663,000.

Governors had been told at a meeting in October the health grade was under "significant pressure" and pay costs had been 5.2 per cent higher than budgeted due to increased partnership delivery and agency staff costs.

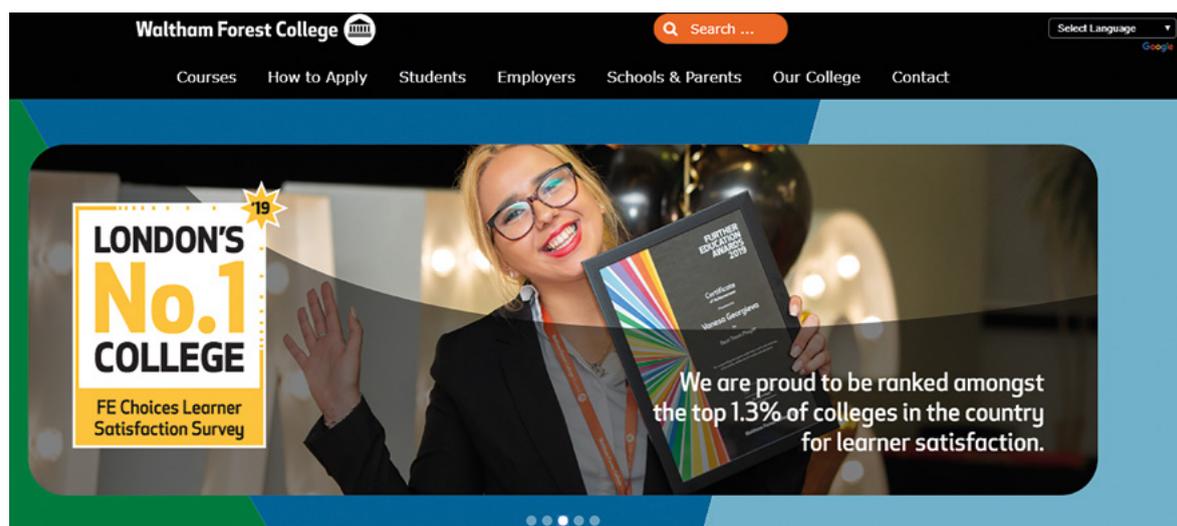
On top of that, the college had additional pay costs of around £228,000 to deliver growth in its ESFA 16-to-19 income. It also had to achieve unfunded income growth of £322,000, and so incurred additional pay costs there.

The college said it has not applied to the ESFA for emergency financial assistance and is not in administered college status. The accounts say Waltham Forest expects to return a financial health score of 'good' in 2019-20.

But Barclays Bank has agreed to provide the college with a temporary overdraft of £500,000 in March and April of this year, which is when the operating cash flow



Di Gowland



is expected to become "challenging" for many colleges, minutes show.

Last July, the grade two college was refused access to the Office for Students' register of higher education on grounds of "quality". The OfS said the number of higher education students progressing from their first to their second year of study showed the college had "failed to demonstrate that it delivers successful outcomes for all of its higher education students".

According to the college's latest accounts, none of their higher education students continued into

2019-20.

Under-recruitment of such students led to a shortfall in income from student loans for Waltham Forest, and this had to be met by increased income from high-needs learners and tuition fees.

Gowland said she is "delighted" to be supporting the college and is looking forward to working with the college and the staff while they seek a permanent principal.

She previously served as Newham College of Further Education's principal from July 2014 to August

2017, after serving as vice principal of Westminster Kingsway, before retiring and setting up as an educational consultant. She is also a governor of the University of Arts London.

College chair Paul Butler said they had "selected Di because of her experience" and because "she brings with her a strong commitment to continuous improvement in quality".

The college is "extremely pleased" she has chosen to join the college, he added.

Waltham Forest said it has started the recruitment process for a permanent principal.

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News

T-level assessment organisations call for 12-month delay in response to Covid-19

BILLY CAMDEN
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Exclusive

The awarding bodies designing the first three T-levels have called on the government to delay their rollout by a year because of the coronavirus pandemic, *FE Week* can reveal.

Pearson, City & Guilds and NCFE have agreed with the Federation of Awarding Bodies that their launch should be combined with wave two and begin in September 2021 instead of 2020.

In a letter to education secretary Gavin Williamson, FAB chief executive Tom Bewick warned that colleges, and therefore the “delivery network”, will be in “crisis management and recovery mode up until the autumn term”.

Similarly, asking employers to provide high-quality industry placements at this time “looks very challenging when you consider that the deep economic shock we are

experiencing will preoccupy company survival plans for at least the next 12 months”.

He added: “Following consultation with our members and, specifically, those AOs that have to date successfully secured licences from you to design these new technical qualifications, I am requesting that you postpone the wave one commencement of three T-levels in September.”

Fifty providers are signed up to deliver the first three routes – in digital, construction and education – from September 2020.

In response to the letter, apprenticeships and skills minister Gillian Keegan said: “We recognise the impact the Covid-19 outbreak will have on T-level providers.

“We are continuing to keep this under review, working closely with providers, as the situation develops and we will provide an update as soon as we possibly can.”

T-levels were originally meant to commence from September 2019, but

former apprenticeships and skills minister Anne Milton announced in July 2017 that she would delay delivery of the first qualifications by 12 months.

Then, in a ministerial direction in May 2018, the then-education secretary Damian Hinds refused a request by the DfE’s permanent secretary Jonathan Slater to delay their start from 2020 to 2021.

This latest call for a delay follows numerous concerns over the rushed timescales for T-levels.

A study in 2019 by the National Foundation for Educational Research, which conducted interviews with half of the 50 providers that will deliver the first T-levels, found that “extremely tight” delivery timescales, a lack of viable industry placements and limited public transport all threaten a successful rollout.

Detailed information on T-level content, assessment and the industry placement is not scheduled to be available until this month – less than six months before teaching commences.



Earlier this year, *FE Week* analysis identified a T-level cold spot in Greater Lincolnshire, where only two providers are scheduled to deliver the qualifications: DN Colleges Group and Grimsby Institute.

There is also a shortage of construction T-level providers in London, as no-one in the capital

is running the qualification from September 2020 and no-one south of the river Thames will be from 2021.

And just last week, this newspaper reported on how the government has embarked on a very last-minute mission to find out if students could fail to secure the mandatory T-level industry placement.

£1m rap collaboration sends apprenticeship site visits soaring

YASEMIN CRAGGS MERSINOGLU
YASEMIN@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Exclusive

The government has celebrated nearly tripling the interest in apprenticeships after spending more than £1 million on the release of a grime song as part of its Fire It Up campaign.

FE Week can reveal the unusual partnership between a YouTube entrepreneur, rapper and the Department for Education (DfE) cost £542,009.65 to deliver, with an additional £323,446.42 spent on its partnership with The Guardian newspaper and £215,426.51 with streaming platform Spotify.

However, the DfE refused to disclose the individual fees paid to the famous participants on the grounds that it is “personal data”, which means the total amount is likely to be much higher.

FE Week has requested an internal review of our Freedom of Information request to find out these costs.



Jamal Edwards MBE, the founder of online music platform SBTV, collaborated with artist P Money, producer Teddy Music (aka Silencer) and director Matthew Walker, who previously worked with stars including Skepta, Stormzy and JME, to create the single and shoot the music video.

The DfE did confirm that it spent £44,000 on the production of apprenticeship track *The Calling*, and it said the launch event cost £8,800.

No fee was paid to SBTV, which uploaded a series of three behind-

the-scenes videos to its platform with more than one million subscribers on YouTube.

The song has now had more than 100,000 views on P Money’s own YouTube channel (said to be much higher than the DfE’s usual organic figures) as well as almost 90,000 views on SBTV’s channel.

The partnerships contributed to a 171 per cent increase in the number of users of the apprenticeship website in January to March compared to the same period last year, from 300,380 to 814,991,

and a 180 per cent rise in sessions, from 385,998 to 1,079,207.

An extra 270,000 people were also reached through YouTube and Instagram.

A DfE spokesperson said: “This campaign was designed to directly appeal to young people and their parents to showcase the huge range and diversity of apprenticeships on offer.

“The success of this campaign shows that by thinking differently, whether it’s by using grime artists or drones, you can successfully reach new audiences and open their minds to the idea that a life-changing apprenticeship could be right for them.”

In response to the FOI, the DfE added that it worked with partners it knew “young people, in particular, respond to, follow, trust and respect”.

For example, Edwards was selected as a digital influencer to increase reach and engagement for his “large and diverse” audience and background, which made him a “great fit” for the campaign.

The YouTube entrepreneur previously said he was “passionate about showing

young people that there are many ways to reach their potential” and that he hoped the track would “help get the message out” that apprenticeships are not just for trades such as plumbing and construction.

Seven apprentices volunteered to help record, produce and promote the song, working on sound and video production, drone engineering, logistics, lighting, hair styling, marketing and social media. Their parents, teachers and employers also volunteered to take part.

Shola West, a 19-year-old level 3 digital marketing apprentice at WhiteHat Apprentice BAME Network, organised the launch party event, promoted it on Twitter and Instagram and recorded a voiceover for the Spotify advert as part of the Fire It Up campaign.

West previously told *FE Week* it was a “great experience” because it showed she was able to put the skills developed during her apprenticeship into practice.

She called the opportunity to work with Edwards and P Money “really exciting” and added that her involvement made the digital marketing apprentice consider working in creative industries in the future.

The Fire It Up campaign was first launched in January last year. The latest phase started in January 2020 and will run until the end of this month, which is considered a key application and recruitment period.

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Will work across all sites with a focus on the delivery of life skills programmes for 16-18 year olds and adults.

Vice Principal Engineering, Construction & Digital

Delivery in Engineering, Construction and ICT/Digital across FE level 2 & 3, WBL and HE.

Vice Principal Quality

Responsible for the effective development of all aspects of quality assurance and fostering an ethos of continuous improvement.

Closing date for applications is Sunday 22nd March 2020.



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Is-bennaeth Dysgu yn y Gwaith ac Ymgysylltu â Chyflogwyr

Yn gyfrifol am yr holl ddarpariaeth dysgu yn y gwaith, dysgu o bell a darpariaeth partneriaethau.

Is-bennaeth Astudiaethau Academaidd

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Darpariaeth Peirianeg, Adeiladu a TGCh/Digidol ar draws lefelau 2 a 3 AB, DyyG ac AU.

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You should be an excellent leader and manager who is able to develop and implement a College wide strategy for E&M that meets the needs of a multi-cultural community. You should also be able to prepare and lead teams through internal and external inspections, manage budgets and meet student recruitment and achievement targets.

For more information and a candidate pack visit www.wlc.ac.uk/jobs

Closing Date: Monday 6th April

- Hammersmith & Fulham College
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- Ealing Green College
The Green, Ealing, London W5 5EW
- Southall Community College
Beaconsfield Road, Southall, Middlesex UB1 1DP
- Park Royal College
Unit 1, Nucleus Park, Central Way, Park Royal, London NW10 7XT
- West London Construction Academy
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Tel: **01604 550109** E-mail: chrismoody@landex.org.uk

Closing date for applications: Friday 27th March 2020



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For more information visit:
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Closing date: Noon on Tuesday 14 April 2020



Curriculum Manager - Business & Computing

Job reference: REQ0211

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- To provide leadership and direction, to give team members clear responsibilities and accountabilities that align to college strategies and values
- To maximise staff utilisation and resources

through astute financial management in order to provide a distinctive high quality student experience

- Although this is a management role you will be expected to lead by example and teach your students to a high calibre

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- BCG Altitude Plus Membership scheme
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For more information or to apply for this role either visit our website www.buckscollegelgroup.co.uk or email hr@buckscollegelgroup.ac.uk

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Bulletin

Movers & Shakers

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



Di Gowland

Interim principal,
Waltham Forest College

Start date March 2020

Previous job

Educational Consultant

Interesting fact

She enjoys long distance walking and has recently completed the South Downs Way



David Phillips

Managing Director,
City & Guilds and ILM

Start date March 2020

Previous job

Executive director, market strategy, products and services,
City & Guilds

Interesting fact

He has trekked up Kilimanjaro in aid of the Scott Bell Fund and Cancer Research UK



Peter Lauener

Chair, Student
Loans Company

Start date April 2020

Previous job

Chair, Construction Industry Training Board; Chair, NCG

Interesting fact

His first wage in the 1960s was half a crown an hour when he was 12 and working for his father, an actuary

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

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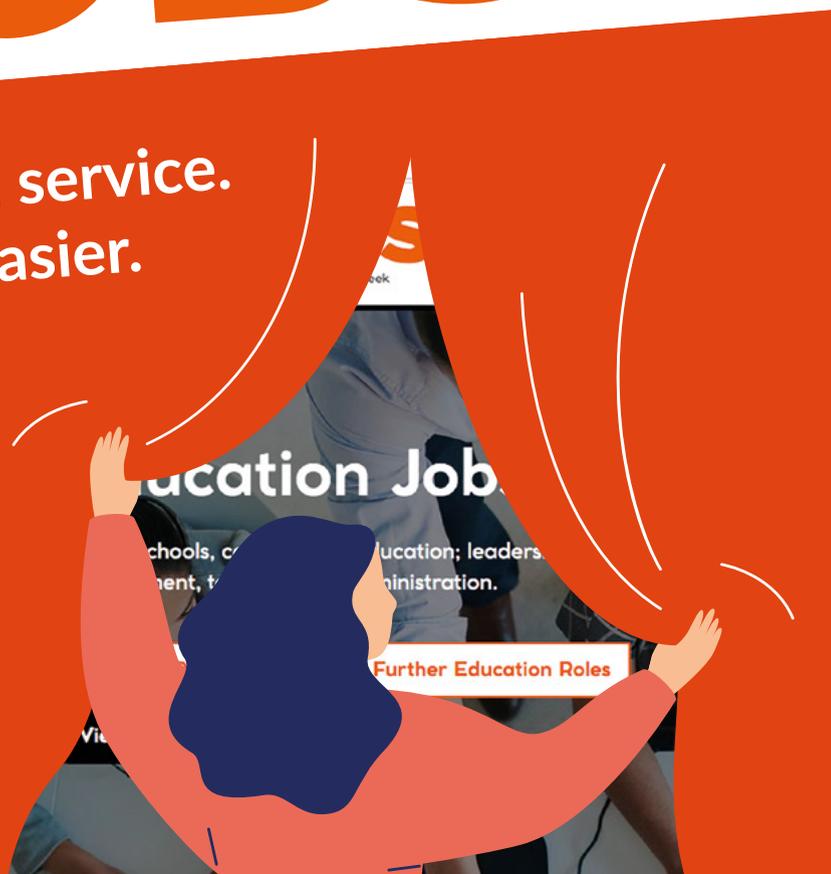
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FE Week Sudoku challenge

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

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

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.



Solutions

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

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