

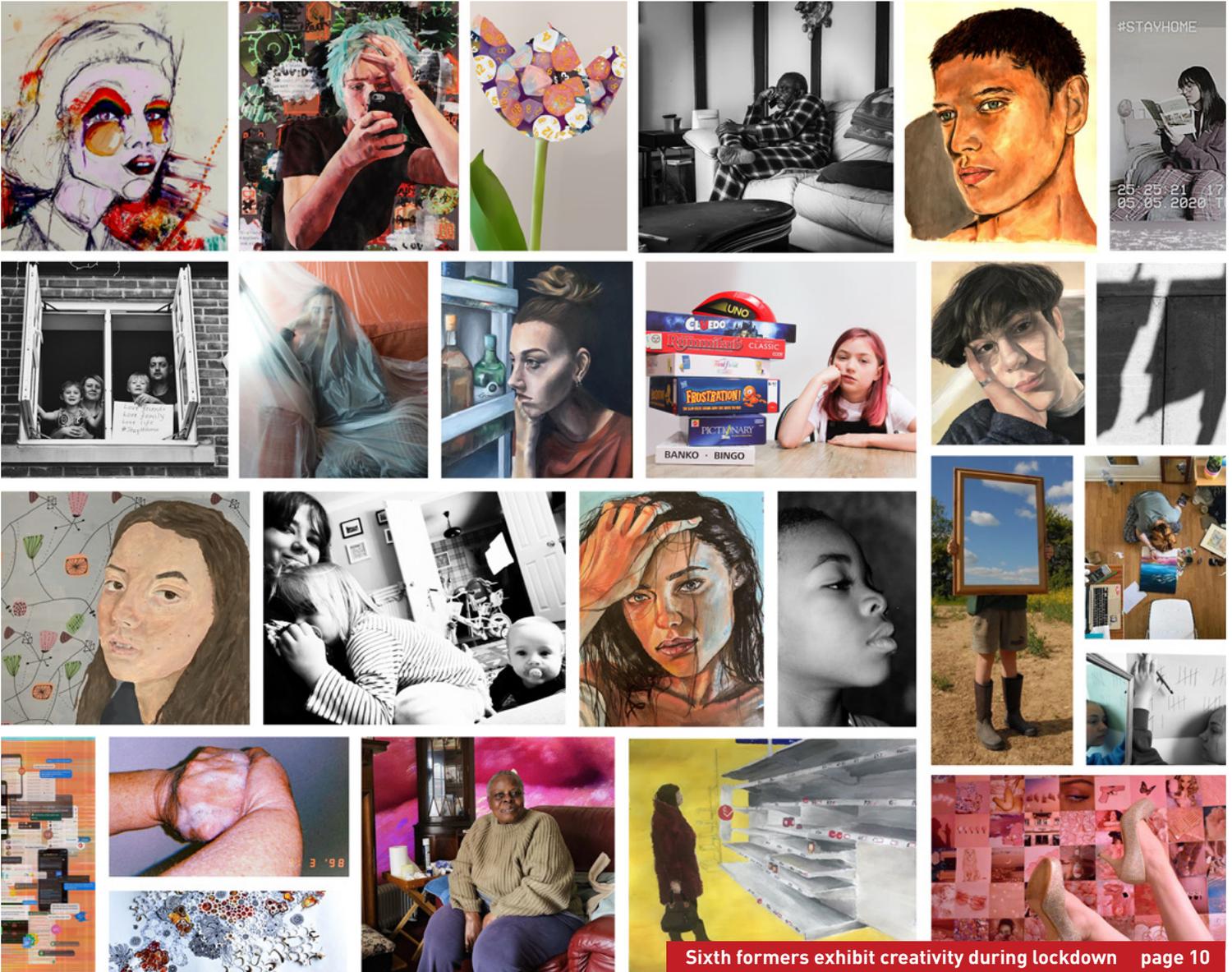


FE WEEK

In-depth, investigative journalism, determined to get past the bluster & explain the facts for the FE & skills sector

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Sixth formers exhibit creativity during lockdown page 10

TERMINATED WITHOUT WARNING

ESFA quietly pull-plug on apprenticeship providers failing minimum standards despite claiming they would defer intervention during coronavirus crisis. Contracts end in July and apprentices will need to be found new providers if they are to finish their course.

FEWEEK

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FEWEEK

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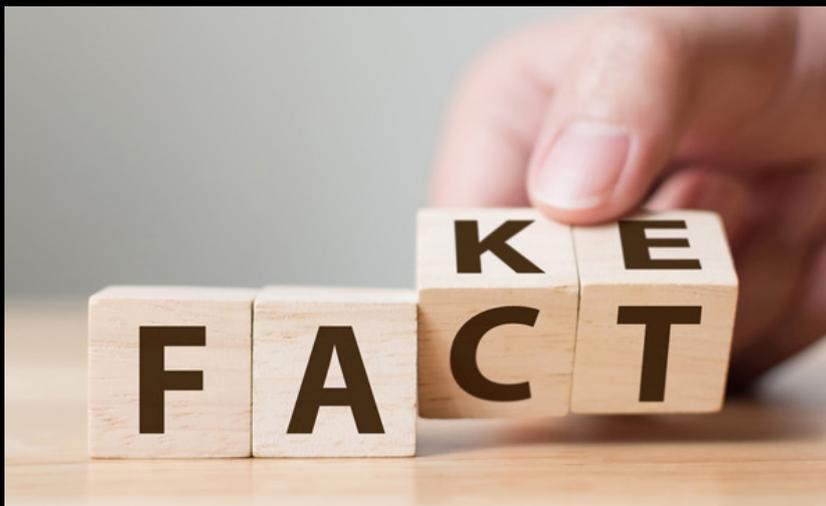
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Labour brands PM's apprenticeship 'guarantee' a 'deception'

BILLY CAMDEN
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Labour's shadow apprenticeships minister has branded the prime minister's "apprenticeship guarantee" proposal a "deception".

Toby Perkins told FE Week he was "concerned" that young people were being given "false reassurance" by Boris Johnson at a time when they are facing "a very difficult job market".

His comments came after Johnson told the nation during his coronavirus briefing on Wednesday that young people "should be guaranteed an apprenticeship" after warning of "many, many job losses" expected from the fallout of Covid-19.

The prime minister added that young people "in particular" are at the highest risk of losing their jobs or being unable to find work, so "it is going to be vital that we guarantee apprenticeships for young people".

His comments made headlines across the national media and has divided opinion in the

FE sector, with some lauding the proposal while others are sceptical about its viability (see page 22).

The idea of an apprenticeship "guarantee" originally came from education select committee chair Robert Halfon, who tabled it Johnson during last week's liaison committee hearing.

It is not clear, however, exactly how an apprenticeship could be "guaranteed" and the government has so far stopped short of explaining how it would work, or even if it is an official policy they are working on.

Perkins said: "I am very concerned that a deception is being performed here because the announcement as I understand it is that the government will fund the learning part of an apprenticeship, but we all know the most expensive part of employing an apprentice is paying their wages, and if the government aren't offering to do that then this no way constitutes a 'guarantee'."

"When young people who are facing potentially a very difficult



job market are given false reassurance it really is most unfair. I'm calling on the government to be clear about what it is they are offering here, and not to use words like 'guarantee' unless they genuinely are guaranteeing that young people will have an apprenticeship."

The Department for Education has provided a statement in response to Johnson's comments, but it fails to reference the "apprenticeship guarantee".

A spokesperson said: "Apprenticeships are an excellent way to get into a wide range of rewarding and valuable careers, and they will continue to play a vital role in delivering the high-quality skills employers need and that will support our economic recovery post Covid-19."

"We are looking at ensuring that we support employers, especially small businesses, to take on new apprentices this year and will provide further detail in due course."

Halfon has written for FE Week on why an apprenticeship guarantee is needed (see page 21).

DfE to tackle 'fake news' with its own rapid rebuttal unit

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Exclusive

The Department for Education has set up a "rapid rebuttal unit" to tackle "fake news".

It is said to be one of the first department-specific teams in government to challenge "misinformation at the source" and rebuff "misleading content" before it reaches the mainstream.

Two job adverts for media officers state that this work is "more vital than ever" in making sure the public is not "deceived by so-called fake news".

It adds: "The department's new rapid rebuttal unit is one of the first in government to be looking to tackle misinformation at the source with a team that will aim to make sure misleading content running in the media or on social media is corrected in the shortest period possible time before it reaches the mainstream and misinforms the public."

A DfE spokesperson told FE Week the unit officially went live last Tuesday and currently has a team of three media officers.

In 2018 Theresa May set up a similar government-wide "rapid response" unit to counter fake news. Michael Gove used it in August last year to target Brexit half-truths.

In March, the Cabinet Office announced this unit would now combat misinformation about Covid-19.

There do not appear to be any other similar teams across Whitehall, which means the DfE could have the first department-specific rebuttal unit.

Damian Hinds, the former education secretary, raised the problem of fake news just before he was sacked in July 2019. He spoke at a social media summit about the "spread of misleading content on vaccinations" in schools, but added this "issue goes much further than that, and without firm action it is set to get a lot worse".

Gavin Williamson, his successor, has not publicly repeated this concern, but his department has rebutted stories published by the media.

On April 18, a preview of the Sunday Times's front page revealed reports that senior ministers had drawn up plans for schools to reopen as early as May 11.

But the DfE tweeted that evening: "No decision has been made on a timetable for reopening schools. Schools remain closed until further notice, except for children of critical workers and the most vulnerable children. Schools will only reopen when the scientific advice indicates it is the right time to do so."

And just this week the DfE published a blog entitled "addressing misleading claims about

department guidance" following two stories that appeared last Sunday.

It said that one in The Independent reported on claims made by National Education Union joint general secretary Mary Bousted that the department's guidance to schools on how to open to more pupils had been updated 41 times since May 12.

The DfE claimed this was "untrue"; the guidance had been updated "just once since it was published last month".

Another article, published by The Mirror, reported that celebrity fitness guru Joe Wicks was due to lead a review of the PE curriculum, which the DfE said again was "not true".

The government's existing anti-fake news units have, however, come in for criticism, with the Liberal Democrats' former Brexit spokesperson Tom Brake last year describing them as "shameful spin machines".

A DfE spokesperson said: "In line with wider work by the government communication service, we want to identify and counter misinformation and disinformation online, whether it is shared inadvertently or maliciously."

"That's why we're looking for talented individuals to join our team, helping us dispel myths and explain education policies to the public using straightforward, easy-to-understand social media content, blogs, and more."

Terminated: ESFA bin apprenticeship providers for low achievement rates

NICK LINFORD
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From front

Exclusive

Apprenticeship providers have been left shocked after the Education and Skills Funding Agency ignored their own coronavirus deferral policy and sent out contract termination letters, *FE Week* can reveal.

The business-ending intervention for failing the minimum standards for achievement rates comes just weeks after the ESFA wrote to providers claiming they would postpone decisions until as late as October, to take account of the "continuing challenges" relating to Covid-19.

One provider that did not wish to be named, with hundreds of apprentices, shared with *FE Week* a letter it received this week that said the agency was providing "notice of termination" on July 31. Access to all funding would then end and the training firm would be removed from the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers.

The letter went on to say all new starts must cease immediately and the provider must "do its utmost to minimise disruption caused to apprentices".

The provider shared the reasons for their



Gillian Keegan



underperformance with the ESFA in February and thought the matter was closed as they had not received the deferral letter sent to other providers last month.

When *FE Week* challenged the Department for Education on the unexpected interventions this week a spokesperson said there had been no change relating to deferrals but that in a small number of cases contracts are being terminated at this stage.

The DfE refused to comment further on why the ESFA was ignoring their own published deferral policy by taking action during the global pandemic.

As previously reported, overall national apprenticeship achievement rates dropped 2.2 per cent points last year to just 64.7 per cent.

The achievement rate for the new apprenticeship standards were particularly low, averaging just 46.6 per cent compared to 68.7 per cent for frameworks.

Providers have to have more than 40 per cent of their cohort on frameworks and standards above a 62 per cent achievement rate to achieve the minimum standard.

The contract termination letter said that in coming to their decision the ESFA had taken account of the evidence submitted by the provider along with "the scale of

underperformance against the minimum standard threshold for 2018 to 2019 and your organisation's track record relative to the minimum standard in previous years".

In an *FE Week* webcast at the end of April, apprenticeships and skills minister Gillian Keegan expressed concern at historic "low-quality" apprenticeships delivery.

She said: "I was quite shocked at some of the lower quality delivery that happened in the first stages of the levy being introduced and I never want to go back to those days...I've met people on the doorstep who've actually said to me this is a load of old rubbish. We have to make sure that every apprenticeship is quality."

Once a notice of contract termination has been issued, the DfE said the ESFA works with the provider to ensure that the apprentices and their employers receive advice about how to successfully complete their learning. This, they said, could include finishing with the same provider or transferring to a new provider, and that in practice, this depends on the time left to complete the learning activity.

The spokesperson went on to say that the ESFA will continue to talk to and monitor all providers who have failed minimum standards for all aged apprenticeships in 2018 to 2019, as part of their management of further education.



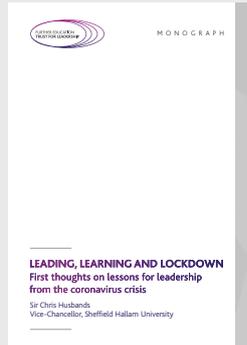
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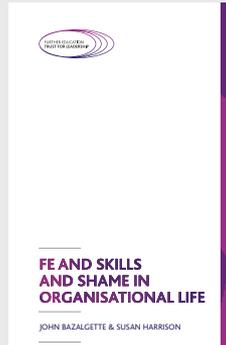
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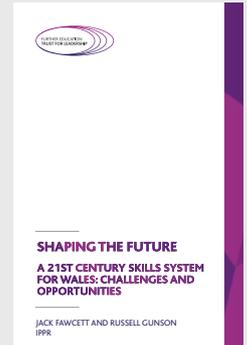
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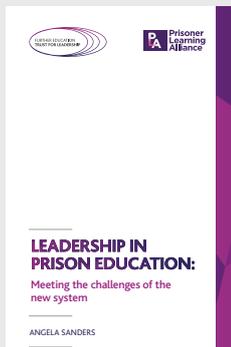
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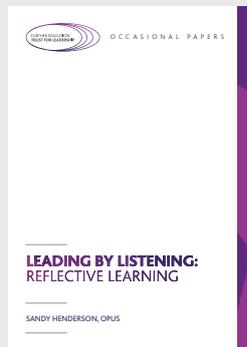
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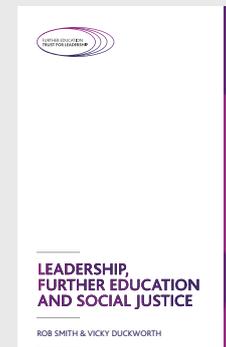
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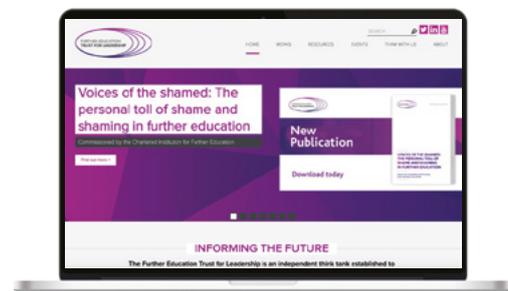
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FE's fight to tackle hate crime

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Exclusive

Hate crimes in colleges have almost tripled in four years as leaders seek to raise awareness in light of a national spike since the coronavirus outbreak.

The data obtained via Freedom of Information requests by *FE Week* from 23 of the 39 police forces in England reveal that 460 offences were recorded in colleges between 2015 and 2019.

There were 50 hate crimes five years ago, a figure that jumped to 72 and then 92 in 2016 and 2017 respectively. The number of offences in colleges rose to 106 in 2018 and increased again to 140 last year.

The Crown Prosecution Service describes hate crimes as offences "motivated by hostility" towards someone's disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or transgender identity.

They can include verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, harassment, assault, bullying and damage to property.

There has been an upward trend nationally, with the number of offences recorded by the police having more than doubled in 2018-19 compared to 2012-13, according to the Home Office. It claimed that increases have been "mainly driven by improvements in crime recording", but also noted that there have been spikes after certain events, such as the EU referendum in 2016 and terrorist attacks in 2017.

Last month, Home Office minister for countering extremism Susan Williams told the home affairs select committee that hate crime directed towards South and East



Asian communities had increased by 21 per cent during the Covid-19 pandemic. Police have also estimated a threefold increase in such incidents against Chinese people between January and March 2020, compared to the previous two years.

Exeter is one area that is experiencing the spike: at least six reports of coronavirus-related attacks were received by Devon and Cornwall Police by March 6.

Exeter College has since committed to using its influence among young people to condemn such acts. Although no Covid-related hate crime incident has taken place at the college, it signed a joint open letter on tackling the issue and racism in its community in the same month, calling recent attacks on people in relation to Covid-19 on the basis of ethnicity "cowardly and ignorant".

It said: "As leading organisations in our community we wanted to send a message of unity and partnership so that everyone knows that we will stand together to tackle hate crime and hateful people."

While each police force has different methods of recording the data, the most common

motivator of hate crimes in colleges provided each year was racism.

For example, graffiti of swastikas was painted in the car park of West Suffolk College in January, according to the *Bury Free Press*. Xenophobic leaflets, telling people to "go back to their homelands", were also found at Oaklands College in Hertfordshire last year, according to the *Herts Advertiser*.

The need to educate perpetrators on reliable sources of information and embed raising awareness into curriculums and enrichment programmes was cited by college leaders who spoke to *FE Week*.

Jane Belcher, head of safeguarding at South Essex College, said some staff and students had in recent months received support in how to make reports, how to keep safe and what to do if they did not feel safe after expressing concern about hate crime in their community following Covid-19. The college was also "very proactive in making sure that there was information on our Moodle pages".

She added there had been three incidents at the college in 2019 and estimates there are under five a year. "All of our staff are told [they're] not bystanders. If we hear it, we step in, we readjust that view and have a conversation."

According to Belcher, tutorials are South Essex College's "linchpin" for open discussions and to highlight individuals who might be at risk or need more support. Staff focus on where potentially harmful student views have come from and what their sources of information are. "It's our job as educators to [develop] those critical thinking skills in our



TOWIE's Bobby Norris (centre) after speaking to learners at South Essex College about his #EndTheTrend2Troll campaign

News

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young people... It's just providing that safe space for them to start understanding why that view isn't accepted."

The safeguarding head has previously used conversation-starters such as a radicalisation storyline on teenage soap opera Hollyoaks, a Buzzfeed article illustrating a double standard between media coverage of Kate Middleton and Meghan Markle, as well as news that Facebook banned far-right groups. The college has also brought in outside speakers to engage learners, such as The Only Way Is Essex's Bobby Norris, who came to its Southend campus in October 2019 as part of his campaign to make online homophobia a specific criminal offence.

Similarly, East Coast College has a number of initiatives in place to tackle hate crime. Nikki Lane, assistant principal, student wellbeing and support, told FE Week a partnership with Norfolk Constabulary began after the Brexit vote, when students and staff raised an increase in incidents in the community. "The idea was actually to look at prevention."

The college uses a tutorial programme of around six interventions a year as well as additional enrichment activities as a "springboard" for groups to understand what a hate message is and to discuss where they are seeing them.

Lane added that apprentices also consider hate crime as part of discussions about equality with assessors, while adult learners are addressed on the topic as part of their induction.

East Coast College said it has seen "reasonably low" increases of hate crimes in recent years. Most incidents at the college have been verbal. However, social media, and accessing the rhetoric of figures such as Tommy Robinson and Katie Hopkins (whose Twitter account has previously been



Students from Stockport College's Equalities Council (part of Trafford College Group) presenting Sylvia Lancaster (centre) with a £640 cheque after fundraising for the Sophie Lancaster Foundation last year. Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, also pictured on her left.

suspended for violating the platform's anti-hate policy), was also blamed.

"[Students] are kind of feeling like maybe it's OK to say those things, and then the conversation that we're having is helping them understand the impact of that."

Trafford College Group hosted its own annual Hate Crime awareness event in March, reaching 1,000 students. Speakers included a victim of an attack outside a mosque, the mother of Sophie Lancaster – who was killed after being targeted because of her Goth subculture identity – as well as members from Remembering Srebrenica, the Bosnian town that was the site of a genocidal massacre in 1995.

Michelle McLaughlin, student engagement and student voice lead, recommended that other colleges reach out to their community and ensure they have representatives that "serve the diversity of the college cohort" and to "keep your finger on the pulse of what's going on in your local area".

While the FOI figures obtained by FE Week are specifically for incidents in colleges, other types of FE providers have also implemented policies to combat the issue.

Bedford-based private provider Firebrand Training receives specialist guidance and a hate crime "heat map" from its designated regional Department for Education FE/HE Prevent coordinator. Ben Hansford, managing director of apprenticeships, said that the company was advised to look out for unacceptable stickers in communal areas and behavioural signals, such as lower-level hate crime and bullying, damage to belongings and "jokes".

Hansford added: "It's critical to train and

support your trainers to spot the indicators early, educate learners through good safeguarding material, have a zero tolerance of bullying and provide proactive welfare support."

A statutory duty for further education providers to "prevent people from being drawn into terrorism" was introduced into government legislation in 2015, after the controversial anti-radicalisation programme (Prevent) was first created in 2003.

Mike Ainsworth, director of London services at Stop Hate UK, a national organisation that supports education providers through its helpline and training services, said their work has shown that racism, homophobia, religious intolerance and disability hate "remain problems in places of further education".

He added that the number of cases reported are a "significant underestimate", with many students (particularly foreign nationals, those with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ community) reluctant to come forward.

Such experiences can have a significant effect on learners. A survey by the National Union of Students in 2010 revealed that victims reported resulting mental health problems in almost a quarter of hate crimes. This included depression, loss of confidence as well as feelings of vulnerability, isolation and being alone.

A government spokesperson said: "There is absolutely no place in our society for hate crimes and we will continue to work across government and with the police to bear down on offenders, support victims and irradiate this prejudice."



Stop Hate UK representative, Angela Wright, at Trafford College Group



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College student exhibition showcases life in lockdown

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From front

An online photography and artworks exhibition to showcase the life of sixth-form college students during lockdown has been launched by the apprenticeships and skills minister, Gillian Keegan.

More than 140 students from 46 colleges submitted contributions to At Home, which is being co-ordinated by the Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA).

They depict the challenges they face during the pandemic, such as separation, social distancing, loneliness and overthinking.

Gillian Keegan said: "This has been a difficult time for the entire country, but this exhibition is a wonderful example of how creativity can flourish in the face of adversity.

"It's great to see how these sixth-form students have captured the experiences of lockdown from a young person's perspective."

One of the featured A-level students from Grimsby-based Franklin College, Kate Johnson, told FE Week: "I wanted to capture the way life has adapted."

Her submission "2 Metres Distance" showed one of the smaller changes (not handling post



Christ the King Sixth Form College student Victoria Pansu's piece

directly) people have made to the way they live their lives that "seem so silly but are incredibly important to try and stop the spread of Covid-19".

Johnson, who wants to study fashion photography at university next year, said the exhibition had opened her eyes to still-life and documentary-style portraiture. She added: "Art is and will always be a form of escapism and people can express their feelings through different art mediums, which I feel is even more important in a time when there isn't much clarification."

Emily Vivian Salomon, an A-level student at Franklin College whose photograph "Hands Are For Holding" is also being showcased, said she decided to participate to have an outlet for creativity while stuck indoors.

She added: "I'm really excited to be given the opportunity, and I can't wait to see what other people have done as well."

Her photograph represents being "physically inside but mentally trying to escape the confines of your own home".

Salomon plans to stay at the college to complete an art foundation course next year and study photography at university after that. Her



Xaverian College student Shannon Baldwin's piece

lockdown experience has also inspired her to produce a short film on the same theme.

Charlotte Davis, an A-level student at Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group, told FE Week that she wanted to portray the "feeling of isolation during lockdown... and not being able to see family".

Davis's artwork shows a family portrait of her grandparents holding her as a baby. They were "really happy" to hear the news about it being selected for the exhibition, she said.

The first-year college student said she decided to submit her work after gaining confidence since the beginning of her course.

Bill Watkin, chief executive of the SFCA, praised the "extraordinary artistic talent" in the sector and said the national exhibition had been put on to "stimulate our thinking about the world this summer".

He added: "If young people are to make a valuable contribution to society – even if they are to be successful scientists, engineers, doctors and technicians – they need to develop their creative skills, their artistic sensitivities and their ability to interact with others.

"All of this will be more important than ever in the post-Covid world."

The exhibition runs until June 19. You can view the full exhibition by visiting <https://www.sixthformcolleges.org/411/at-home>.



Emily Vivian Salomon from Franklin College and her piece (right)



Manchester and Grimsby colleges both double winners at AoC Beacon Awards

YASEMIN CRAGGS MERSINOGLU
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The Manchester College and the Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education both picked up two honours each in the 25th Association of Colleges' Beacon Awards.

The winners and runners-up were announced in a virtual awards ceremony on Thursday after the scheduled parliamentary reception in July had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Eight prizes were handed out to six further education establishments from a total of 130 entries submitted by more than 100 colleges.

Education secretary Gavin Williamson said: "I'm proud to champion colleges, further education and skills for the whole country and, as colleges, you should be incredibly proud of your actions, your achievements and the businesses and people you continue to help and to support."

The Manchester College received the Careers and Enterprise Company Award for Innovation in Careers and Enterprise for offering students "a seamless, holistic experience" on their pathways to work-readiness.

It also won the Jisc Award for Effective Use of Digital Technology in Further Education for creating more than 100 bespoke assistive technology solutions each year.

The Manchester College said it was "tremendously proud" of its success and tweeted: "Thank you to all of our amazing colleagues who have gone above and beyond to make this possible."

Julie Nerney, chair of the AoC's charitable trust, said Manchester College's work enabling learners to make informed choices about their progression will have a "lasting effect on the rest of their lives". She added that excelling digitally is particularly important during this period.

The other double award-winner, Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education,



picked up first prize in the virtual ceremony – the British Council Award.

It won for what the AoC described as the UK's largest staff international research innovation – an Erasmus+ project that "improved opportunities for their local community".

Grimsby Institute also received the Edge Award for Excellence in the Practical Delivery of Technical and Professional Learning for "radically changing the teaching and learning on its full-time media courses, trailblazing a brave new way forwards for vocational delivery with innovation, creativity, responsiveness and a collaborative approach with employers and industry, who work hand in hand to facilitate qualification achievement".

In celebration, Grimsby Institute tweeted: "Congratulations to our fantastic students and staff. We are so proud of your incredible efforts, today and always."

Nerney added that Grimsby Institute's work and partnerships overseas show "how vital colleges are to maintaining our reputation and connections as the UK prepares to leave the EU" and added that the college is "inspirational in the way the teaching delivered is accessible, and students get to experience

education in a relatable way".

Another Beacon Award winner was EKC Group, which took home the Pears #iwill Award for Social Action and Student Engagement for its social action and student engagement through a series of community weeks. These had a positive impact on the community they serve.

In addition, Barnsley College was handed the NOCN Group Mental Health and Wellbeing Award for a college-wide organisational transformation programme to enhance the mental health, wellbeing and welfare of its learners, its staff and its community.

Fareham College picked up the City & Guilds Award for College Engagement with Employers after designing a "highly innovative" civil engineering and groundworks training initiative.

And Preston's College received the RCU Support for Students Award for creating bespoke programmes for asylum-seeker students. The AoC said Preston's initiative "aims to empower and equip learners with skills vital to starting to reclaim their lives, through a supported education, after such shocking and harrowing journeys and ordeals".

Redundancies planned at massive apprenticeships provider

BILLY CAMDEN
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Exclusive

A huge training provider that delivers hundreds of apprenticeships for the civil service is planning to make major redundancies.

Training giant QA Limited, which currently employs over 2,250 staff, is bracing itself for business to plummet following recent conversations with their clients as a result of Covid-19.

FE Week understands that hundreds of those jobs are now at risk, but the company would not be drawn on a figure. It is preparing to launch a consultation on the losses in the coming weeks.

A QA spokesperson said that since the start of the pandemic, the firm has taken “extensive measures to ensure that it can continue to serve its customers and provide critical training virtually, while its training centres have been closed.

“Due to the severe economic recession,

however, it is now clear that activity in our sector will be reduced for some time and this has been confirmed in recent conversations with clients,” they added.

“As a result, the group needs to reduce costs and this will involve all areas of the business and is likely to result in a number of redundancies.”

The spokesperson said these steps will ensure that QA “weathers the current crisis well and is then able to play a key role in the economic recovery that will follow by providing skills to help businesses grow and create new jobs”.

QA is one the largest apprenticeship providers in England and one of the first to announce redundancy plans as a result of coronavirus.

It offers commercial training and apprenticeships to the technology sector and recorded a £181 million turnover in its most recently published financial accounts, for 2018.

The firm already made 90 of its staff redundant in January 2020 after taking a strategic decision to refocus its apprenticeship division to more technology focussed programmes, according to the spokesperson.

QA has 19 training centres across England and

was rated ‘good’ by Ofsted following a visit in January this year when the firm had 6,500 apprentices. Around 2,700 of those were studying IT, around 2,500 were on business administration and law apprenticeships, and 2,000 were on business management apprenticeships.

It is also an approved provider of apprenticeships to the Crown Commercial Service and a subcontractor to KPMG – training hundreds of apprentices for the civil service in departments such as the Cabinet Office and the Treasury. KPMG was rated ‘inadequate’ by Ofsted in March 2020 in a report that criticised the provision offered by its subcontractors.

QA came under new leadership in September 2019 when former RBS and Direct Line Group boss Paul Geddes took over as chief executive from William Macpherson.

Macpherson retired two years after he helped strike a deal for private equity firm CVC Capital Partners to buy out QA from previous owners Bregal Investments. The deal was reportedly worth £700 million.

AELP drops Covid-19 supplier relief legal challenge

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The Association of Employment and Learning Providers has decided not to pursue legal action against the Education and Skills Funding Agency’s Covid-19 supplier relief scheme.

Lawyers have advised that the only challenge they could now take would be to seek a judicial review, which the board of the membership organisation believes would come “at a significant cost”.

A statement released on Monday added that while a positive result from a judicial review would be to review the supplier relief process, there would still be “no guarantee of substantial support from the Department for Education for suppliers even after that” and this would also “take time, to a point where it might be too late for many AELP members”.

A legal letter was sent from law firm Veale Wasbrough Vizards LLP on behalf of the AELP

on April 27 after the ESFA excluded the majority of apprenticeship providers (those funded through the government’s digital system) from their supplier relief scheme.

It argued that the ESFA’s claim that apprenticeships funded through the digital system, mainly with levy-paying employers, are a contract with the employer and provider was “an abuse of power” and makes their supplier relief scheme “unlawful”.

The Government Legal Department (GLD) responded on May 14 and concluded that it is “not accepted that the relief scheme is unlawful on any of the grounds alleged by the AELP (or on any other grounds)”.

AELP said their lawyers have indicated that the GLD’s response does not make a case for defending the DfE’s position on the application of supplier relief, and that the AELP’s board feels “strongly” that the letter is simply one of “rebuttal and it avoids addressing the key issues such as the legal agreement between the ESFA and a provider for levy-funded apprenticeships constituting a



contract”.

The Labour Party’s shadow education team wrote to education secretary Gavin Williamson last week and accused the government of failing to make a “serious attempt” to answer AELP’s claim.

They also called for officials to abandon their “very flimsy case” for the majority of apprenticeships from the supplier relief scheme.

A photograph of four young women sitting at a table in a classroom, engaged in a hands-on activity. One woman is holding a red object, possibly a small toy or tool, and they are all looking at it with interest. The background shows a typical classroom setting with a computer monitor and a green wall.

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June 15 reopening: the key points

BILLY CAMDEN
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Last week, prime minister Boris Johnson gave colleges and other FE providers the green light to begin their wider reopening from June 15 after announcing the government's "five tests" for easing lockdown were all being met.

Leaders had been preparing to begin face-to-face contact with more students from June 1, but the decision to enforce a two-week delay to this was made on May 24.

The Department for Education has updated its guidance for the wider reopening of FE settings, including apprenticeships, in recent days to assist providers with their plans.

Here are the key points you need to know.

Providers have 'flexibility' over which learners can return



From the week commencing June 15, FE providers "should offer some face-to-face contact for 16-to-19 learners on the first year of a study programme" alongside the current provision offered to vulnerable learners (including those at high risk of becoming NEET) and the children of critical workers.

This will "primarily" impact colleges but will also include a "small number of local authority providers, special post-16 institutions and independent training providers".

While the DfE's "overriding principle" is that the focus should be 16-to-19-year-olds on the first year of a two-year programme, there is "flexibility" to bring back four other types of learners, including adults.

This includes adult students in classes where they are on the same 16-to-19 vocational course, as well as 16-to-19 learners who were due to finish this academic year but have not been able to because their assessments have been deferred.

Apprentices can also be brought back for face-to-face contact.

The last group that can be brought back are learners who "may be on extended programmes, for example because they are studying part time, alongside caring responsibilities or had to retake exams or part of their programme". If they are part way through a study programme, and have "key" exams and assessments next year, they "can be included".

Can apprentices of all ages return?

Yes, but 16-to-19 apprentices should again be "prioritised".

The DfE updated its separate guidance for apprenticeships on Tuesday which said they support offering face-to-face contact to any 16-to-19 apprentice, although training providers could offer this to "certain groups", such as those on the first year of an apprenticeship, those who require on-site training to help them complete their apprenticeship, or those who have upcoming "key assessment dates" and would "therefore particularly benefit from face-to-face training".

Providers "can choose to allow" apprentices who are over 19 to attend, but "should continue to prioritise 16-to-19 apprentices".

Only welcome back 25 per cent of students at a time

To help reduce the coronavirus transmission risk, the guidance states the number of learners attending at any one time will be "limited to a quarter of those on the first year of a two-year 16-to-19 study programme".

This is in "addition" to vulnerable young people and children of critical workers outside of this cohort who might already be in full-time attendance.

If adult learners or apprentices do return for face-to-face delivery, the maximum number of 16-to-19-year-olds attending on site at any one time "must be reduced to ensure the setting remains within the overall limit".



Remote learning 'should remain the predominant mode of learning'

The DfE said they recognise that for some programmes, remote education will be working "effectively with a high degree of learner engagement".

Colleges and other providers will have "flexibility to decide the appropriate mix of online and face-to-face content for each programme, within the constraint of limiting those on site at any one time, reflecting what will maximise learner engagement as well as supporting more vulnerable learners, and enabling the provider as a whole to minimise transmission risk".

They added that remote education "should remain the predominant mode of learning during this time".

A range of protective measures should be implemented but funded from own budgets

The DfE said they "will ask settings to implement a range of protective measures", including increased cleaning, reducing "pinch points" (such as at the start and end of day), and utilising outdoor space.

Any additional costs arising from wider opening, such as personal protective equipment (PPE) must, however, be funded "from existing college budgets".

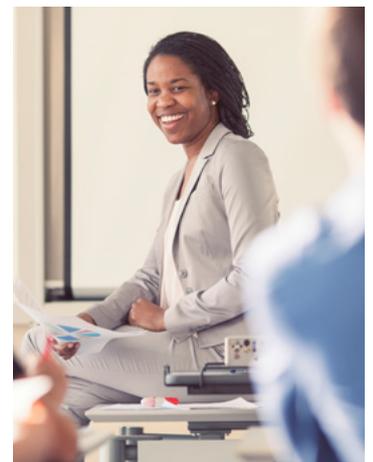


Furlough scheme being tapered

Wider government guidance on their job retention scheme, which is being used by many providers in FE, has also been updated in recent days following chancellor Rishi Sunak's announcement on how it will work beyond June.

Leaders should note that from July 1, 2020, they will have the "flexibility to bring previously furloughed employees back to work part-time".

And importantly, the scheme will "close" to new entrants from June 30.



'A very different September' debated by roundtable of experts

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The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a great deal of disruption across education, including cancelled exams and campus closures to most learners, the impact of which is expected to be felt into the next academic year and likely beyond.

Education leaders and policy experts discussed the anticipated ongoing impact on 16-to-24-year-olds, adult learners and apprenticeships at an FE Week roundtable debate on Tuesday, in partnership with NCFE.

It followed the joint publication of a discussion paper by NCFE and Campaign for Learning, education policy consultant Mark Corney, and director of policy at Hoxley adult education network Susan Pember, which warns of a "very different September" to the one Whitehall had planned for.

One key area of concern is safe travel and social distancing on transport for younger learners as they move to and from their college or training provider.

Principal of New College Durham, John Widdowson, told the roundtable this is a particular problem for rural areas and he is considering a shortened college day, for example, between 10am and 3.30pm, to lessen pressure on public transport at peak times.

"We know that only half capacity will be allowed on each bus that comes in because of social distancing, we know that they are going to prioritise people coming to work, so we're thinking about maybe a differently timed college day," he explained.

Widdowson added that his college is also "thinking about potentially having – instead of trying to plan a curriculum on a linear basis, September through to June-July – to modularise it, so we'll do complete units of learning, which is something we've not really done before, but that then gives them something in the bank".

David Robinson from the Education Policy Unit touched on the topic of calculated grades being awarded to students this summer following the cancellation of exams. He warned that, as teacher assessment "tends to be biased" against disadvantaged learners, it could prove

an additional challenge to post-16 institutions to match them to a programme of study, so there "may be more adjustments needed in those early stages".

Corney tabled education select committee chair Robert Halfon's idea of an "apprenticeships guarantee" (see page 19) after prime minister Boris Johnson said he would "look at the idea" last week and mentioned it again during his coronavirus briefing on Wednesday (see page 4).

Corney cautioned against this potential "overpromise" and instead recommended the expansion of funding for 19-to-24 full-time places at FE colleges, maintenance support to complete level 3 qualifications and a T-level "guarantee".

Robinson challenged the latter, arguing the roll-out of the new technical qualifications is already "relatively slow", with capacity concerns within the sector, and that this could put it at further risk.

The Association of Employment and Learning Providers' chief policy officer Simon Ashworth suggested traineeships as an alternative established programme to help young people develop their skills to enter the jobs market, which he said could be a "useful vehicle" if flexibilities are introduced in the long term.

However, Brenda McLeish, chief executive of Learning Curve Group, said there are "big concerns" over the provision of work placements due to Covid-19 and staff redundancies, as well as the ability to recruit new apprentices during this period.

She said: "What we need is definitely a skills training programme, and a funding guarantee for these people."

Turning to the needs of adults, Stephen Evans, chief executive of the Learning and Work Institute, claimed: "We really need a much bigger scale of ambition and action and urgent action to get proper help and support to [furloughed workers] as well."

McLeish talked about the success of her provider's #EducateWhileYouIsolate campaign, which had received 28,000 expressions of interest in online courses within its first six weeks, but lamented that there was "no funding pot there to sustain it... [or] any increase in the adult



education budget".

She added that there will be a "fear factor" for adults returning to work or participating in groups, so believes it will be necessary to offer a "blended model" for the foreseeable future.

The final discussion point of the roundtable was the impact on apprenticeships. Corney proposed a single education and apprenticeship participation budget for 16-to-18-year-olds to switch between different types of provision.

Ashworth called the idea a "no-brainer" but said it should be funded by government rather than the levy.

Robinson questioned whether there was a need to "triage" sector demands to those which would make the most impact due to the number of industries asking for support, concluding it "needs to be simple and broad, rather than lots of small sector asks".

In contrast to the view of Nick Hillman, director of the Higher Education Policy Institute, that apprenticeships were not "near the top of [universities'] concerns at this time", Ashworth said some higher education institutions see them as an "opportunity to supplement or refill some of the income they might lose from other traditional streams".

Pember, who "didn't want to be doom and gloom", concluded the roundtable was underestimating size of unemployment in autumn, and doubts that employers will offer apprenticeships to level 2 and 3 learners rather than existing employees at higher levels in the next 18 months.

To watch the debate
CLICK HERE

Profile

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Introducing...

GERARD GARVEY

Principal, Newcastle Sixth Form College



'I'm doing the job I always wanted to do. I can still take it further here.'

JESS STAUFENBERG
@STAUFENBERGJ

FE Week meets a sixth-form college principal who has known since he was 17 what he wanted to be

"I remember getting to sixth form and thinking vividly, 'this is what I want to work in. This is the environment for me.'" It may seem quite

incredible that as a 17-year-old, Gerard Garvey, principal of Newcastle Sixth Form College, got to the last two years of his education and fell in lifelong love with sixth-form provision.

But it makes sense when you hear about his feeling as a younger man of not always fitting in, and the purpose that his qualifications and university degree gave. Garvey is a committed advocate for the power of years 12 and 13, and the A-levels he rather movingly calls "your passport qualifications".

Garvey grew up in Knowsley, Liverpool, one of the most deprived areas in England. His father died when he was 5 and his mother brought up him and his baby brother. "My mum did a cracking job of holding it all together, but when you're 26 and you've got to do it alone, that's tough."

He headed to Knowsley Hey comprehensive, which at the time he didn't realise was in a struggling area. "You look back and look at the statistics, and you think 'blimey'. I've thought

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a lot about other people in my class who were bright, but didn't end up with qualifications that would allow them to move on. I've done all right for myself and that was because of qualifications. There was just a handful of people from my year who went to university."

University wasn't quite what Garvey's family expected him to do. His mum's family were "hard-working" people in trade professions, and there "wasn't really a culture of academic aspiration at home, so sometimes I did feel a little different".

Coming to terms with his sexuality heightened the sense of standing apart. "I didn't come out until I was 24. In my teens and early 20s, I didn't know it, but I had depression and was struggling."

Not following other family members down the same job paths did not surprise them, he admits. "I think they almost expected me to go to university in the end because I was a bit novel!" He recalls with delight new conversations and ideas encountered during his film studies degree at Liverpool John Moores University.

But Garvey is clear it was the sixth form at Knowsley Community College that changed his fortunes. He recalls being encouraged by "charismatic teachers" to pursue film and media (the subject he has taught in sixth-form colleges since). "Doing A-levels for me set in motion a series of events that has brought me to where I am now. That's why I've been so



Gerard with Newcastle Sixth Form College Student of the Year 2020, Clark Kent Chavez

committed to sixth forms in particular, because I understand the power and real transformation of those qualifications. My GCSEs were modest, but actually A-levels really opened up those opportunities."

His self-awareness as a teenager about the possibilities of sixth form now makes sense. The setting had provided freedom and enjoyment. Rather wonderfully, his mother later retrained as a hair and beauty teacher at his old college.

But as a graduate Garvey was far from ready to settle, and he attributes his career

"wanderlust" to not venturing out of Liverpool for his degree. He was also ambitious, and moved to New College Telford to complete his PGCE. One day, a staff member from Winstanley sixth form college in Wigan came to give a talk. "They were saying how wonderful their college was, the best in the country, and I thought, 'right, I want to work there.'" But it was a more academically selective college that took in "really well-qualified 16-year-olds", and Garvey discovered it was not quite what he wanted.

"I remember thinking, 'do you know

what, I'm not sure they need me'. It didn't feel like the kind of college I would have gone to myself - in fact, because of my GCSEs I wouldn't have got in."

"They expected me to go to university because I was a bit novel!"

He left to become head of media at Joseph Chamberlain College in Birmingham under its inspiring principal, Lynn Morris. He stayed for five years until 2010 - and still calls Morris for advice on leadership problems. Her ethos was that no one, staff or students, would be allowed to "opt out": everybody should be striving for brilliant outcomes. "That ethos has really stuck with me. That is the kind of college I want to run now."

After senior leadership roles at Rochdale Sixth Form College and then Barnsley College's sixth form, Garvey is now taking that high-



Gerard aged 6

Profile

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standards ethos to Newcastle. He is the college's second principal since it opened in 2014 under one of the country's largest college groups, NCG. He admits the large geographical spread of the group has sometimes been "misunderstood": it includes Newcastle, Newcastle Sixth Form College, Carlisle College, West Lancashire College, Kidderminster College and Lewisham and Southwark Colleges, which seem impossibly far apart. But there are upsides, Garvey says.

"I understand the power and real transformation of qualifications"

"It's not one mega college stretching across the country; it's about seven colleges working together. We collaborate and share ideas." One significant positive is the financial clout, with £25 million poured into Newcastle Sixth Form out of NCG's cash reserves (no loan needed). "We could never have got that as a standalone college." These could be bygone days, however, since in January it emerged the Education

and Skills Funding Agency may be clawing back funding from the group, following "data anomalies". However, the point about collaboration still stands.

But there is a downside. Garvey has introduced what he calls "cultural change and contract change" to make improvements, yet he struggles to demonstrate this to parents. He's driving a culture of excellence and has changed the college's contracts so he can recruit staff more quickly and set higher salaries. At the same time, he's made the college more inclusive by expanding an access programme that allows students without the necessary grades to take a one-year GCSE programme, to ensure they can begin their desired A-levels the following year.

Yet there is a frustrating catch. To see Newcastle Sixth Form College's results, you have to look at NCG's overall data and find their A-level provision (now an impressive 0.18 progress score). That's unclear to a parent. Similarly, the college has no individual Ofsted report and instead is lumped under NCG, which was graded 'requires improvement' at its last full inspection. In November, Ofsted suggested it could move to "campus level" inspection reports for college groups, but little has been confirmed. "It's a big challenge for us,"

Garvey says. "You're trying to persuade parents, but in league tables we're down as NCG. The competition can use that to their advantage."

Garvey appears deeply optimistic, energetic and self-reflective. He is frank about what he calls "not a high point" in his career – when he was appointed chair of governors at Discovery School in Newcastle, which closed within four years in 2018 after failing to recruit enough pupils and being graded 'inadequate'.

"I look back on it with sadness. I learned an awful lot, but you don't necessarily want to learn from a school being closed. You're not in charge as chair, but you are carrying a lot of responsibility for it." There are no plans for NCG to venture back into pre-16 provision, he adds. However, he would like more sixth-form colleges to join NCG, to share best practice.

"It's not one mega college; it's about seven colleges working together"

After 19 years in the sector, Garvey is a positive voice for the power of A-levels and, indeed, university. "We're talking about university from day one. A-levels are a passport qualification. Sometimes, when students are put on a mixed programme of A-levels and technical qualifications, it's because staff are worried they won't succeed. We don't offer a mix: we believe, if you've got the best teacher and learner, you can turn A-levels into a success." With university degrees still linked to higher earnings outcomes for students, such a voice is important.

Meanwhile, for Garvey this post will soon be his longest held in FE. "I think I'm doing the job I always wanted to do. You need to enjoy what you're doing, rather than move on to the next thing. I can still take it further here." It sounds like he has arrived at his destination. Let's hope the accountability measures are changed soon to reflect his and his team's hard work.



Gerard with his Mum, Gela, and partner, Rich



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ROBERT HALFON

Chair of the education select committee



We must grab the chance to create a bold new vision for apprenticeships

An apprenticeship guarantee is just one measure in a radical new approach - a chance to re-establish a ladder of opportunity, says Robert Halfon

Last week I raised with the prime minister the idea of an apprenticeship guarantee for our young people, with everyone between 16 and 25 with the right qualifications having access to an apprenticeship in a relevant business or social enterprise.

We must recognise the hugely important role that apprenticeships can play as we emerge into a post-pandemic society. It is vital that the government takes radical action to harness their benefits for the good of our economy and next generation.

“Over the past year our apprenticeship dream seems to be stalling”

The apprenticeship guarantee would be funded by the £3 billion skills budget announced in the Conservative manifesto at the general election. This money would cover the training costs of every would-be apprentice. The Department for Education must then make sure that there is a proper progression of apprenticeships from level 2 to degree level, and make sure every

young person can be given that opportunity to move on.

FE Week has posed an important question about how the apprenticeship guarantee would work. I am pleased that Boris Johnson has agreed to look at the idea as a first step and it now falls on everyone with a stake in making apprenticeships a success to get together to work out how to make it happen.

It is all about putting in place the conditions for apprenticeships to flourish and I am determined that the education committee will play its part in pushing the government to act and work with businesses and training providers on a radical new approach to skills.

There needs to be an evangelisation of what apprenticeships can do, from the prime minister all the way through to every member of the government. We are lucky that the education secretary is passionate about skills and further education - and that Gillian Keegan, the skills minister, did a degree apprenticeship (the only MP to have done so).

Every day, ministers, MPs, peers and all those in authority should be talking up apprenticeships, and encouraging businesses to take apprentices on and young people to take them up. Businesses, FE colleges and training providers need more support to make this possible.

Finally, there should be a target that 50 per cent of students study degree apprenticeships in which



they will earn while they learn, have no debt at the end and, unlike many graduates, be virtually guaranteed a good job.

Over the past few years it looked like we were really making progress in building an apprenticeship and skills nation. Between 2010 and 2015 more than two million apprenticeships were created - since then another 1.5 million. About 90 per cent of qualified apprentices then stay on with their employers.

Sadly, over the past year our apprenticeship dream seems to be stalling. Even before the pandemic, the number of apprenticeship starts in the first half of the last academic year had dropped by 11 per cent, with an even greater drop of 15 per cent for those aged between 16 and 19.

Last month's report from the Sutton Trust laid bare the challenge that apprentices and businesses have faced from Covid-19. It suggested up to two-thirds of apprentices have lost out on work experience or learning, with more than a third furloughed. Eight per cent have been made redundant and 17 per cent have had off-the-

job learning suspended.

The results of this survey are incredibly worrying. Not just because our skills deficit will widen - the OECD found that 40 per cent of workers in the UK are in a job for which they are not properly qualified - but, more significantly, because hundreds of thousands of young people may not have a chance to climb the jobs ladder once this awful pandemic is over.

We've done enough tinkering with apprenticeships, the levy clearly is here to stay and it is right that big business should contribute to the cost of training. We now need a bold grand vision, something that will really excite the nation and say to every parent that their son or daughter will have an apprenticeship, skills training and a job future-proofed for the fourth industrial revolution.

The coronavirus pandemic should be recognised as an important moment for re-establishing a ladder of opportunity. With an apprenticeship guarantee, every young person will have the chance to get the skills and training they need for a prosperous future.

The prime minister's 'apprenticeship guarantee': over-optimistic or visionary?

Two of our regular commentators on vocational education policy have ended up working together at the same consultancy. However, they have divergent views on whether the government can "guarantee" a person an apprenticeship. Here, each sets out their argument...

Possible? No

JONATHAN SIMONS

Director of education, Public First



Possible? Yes

JOHN COPE

Deputy director of education, Public First



An apprenticeship is a protected term in law. It means that someone undertaking one must be following an approved programme of study; must be eligible for off-the-job training for a proportion of the week; and must be employed.

That last element is crucial. It's what makes an apprenticeship different from college-based learning, which can be done in or out of employment.

The government is very keen on apprenticeships, mostly because of the link to employers. As well as hiring the apprentices, groups of employers have also set the standards that apprentices work towards. And it is employers who choose which apprentices to take on in their company, and how many, and where to deploy them. All of this activity is covered under the much-used phrase "an employer-led system".

And it's because we have an employer-led system that we simply can't have an apprenticeship guarantee:

because it's not within the government's gift. Unlike university places, or college places, which can be more or less expanded as far as the government would pay for them, apprenticeships also need employers willing to offer them.

And all the data suggests that this is going to be very difficult. Many current apprentices are having their training paused, and new starts are plummeting, as companies furlough their staff and wait out the Covid storm. Sadly, it looks as if the economic recovery will be slower than first thought. It's unlikely that many companies will be returning to pre-crisis levels of training, let alone offering more.

Of course, there is more that government can and should do to promote high-quality apprenticeships – and I'm all in favour of those things that John sets out. But to offer a guarantee to young people, when it can't be met, isn't just semantics – it's misleading, and poor policy.

In normal times, employers should lead the apprenticeship system, as ultimately there needs to be a real job at the end. We are not in normal times though – as the prime minister's "apprenticeship guarantee" for young people rightly recognises.

The proposal has already been met with a barrage of doom-mongers and scepticism. Some justified, given the pace of apprenticeship reform, and from a policy purist point, you can never 100 per cent "guarantee" anything. Such thinking, though, would have vetoed the furlough scheme as "too expensive" and flinched at helping the self-employed as "too hard to administer".

More than any politician, Boris Johnson understands that to govern is not about patching up the status quo. Politics is the art of the possible – the attainable. Are we saying young people don't deserve the same exceptional support our economy has received? I hope not.

So how could it work?

Cash incentives for the private sector

The UK is an outlier internationally. We pay high apprentice salaries (much more than Germany) and employers pay a levy and all the costs of taking on an apprentice. In normal times, a reasonable expectation. But now?

We should flip this on its head, like in Australia. The government should pause the levy and actually pay employers to take on an apprentice (on the condition there is a job at the end).

Fire up the public sector

The public sector is already a huge apprenticeship provider. We should crank this up even more. And not just for the sake of artificially keeping NEET figures down – this is an opportunity to fill critical shortages. We need more nurses, more teachers, more police. There is an apprenticeship route ready for each.

So there we go – how the PM's "apprenticeship guarantee" could be delivered with political will, new money, and vision. Young people deserve nothing less.

JUSTINE GREENING

Former secretary of state for education and founder of the Social Mobility Pledge



FE has a pivotal role over the next two years (and there is no time to lose)

The sector must be allowed to respond to demands from existing and new students, many of them disadvantaged, says Justine Greening. It must also be ready to help hundreds of thousands of people to reskill

Education transformed my life – and my time in further education at Thomas Rotherham College in south Yorkshire was a crucial part of that.

I studied there for the A-levels that helped me to become the first person in my family to go to university. But it gave some of my friends the chance to take a more vocational route.

FE colleges are the backbone of the education system that helps many young people take the next steps after leaving school. They especially matter for those from more disadvantaged backgrounds and communities.

We already know that the education shutdown has most harmed those young people with the most restricted access to opportunity. They must be the priority for any education catch-up plan – which means that FE must also be a priority. It educates the young people with the least time left in the education system to regain lost time.

With recession looming, FE colleges could play a further crucial role. The steady digital shift of the economy meant there was already a need for the government to focus more on



retraining and reskilling, but Covid-19 has turbocharged this shift.

FE has a pivotal role to play for this country over the next two years. It must be allowed to respond to demands from existing students and those arriving into the system – and it must be able to help hundreds of thousands of people to reskill.

“We cannot allow a new generation to have its talent wasted”

Now is the time for the government to truly recognise its importance. It will define how well we handle the challenge of keeping people on track with their careers in spite of everything the economy throws at them.

My father was out of work

for a year after he lost his job in the steel industry in the 1980s. It was hard to reskill, especially with so little advice on what sort of role to retrain for. Facing what economic forecasters say may be another crisis of high unemployment, we cannot allow a new generation to have its talent wasted.

Rishi Sunak, the chancellor, said that he would do “whatever it takes” to help businesses and families get through the coronavirus crisis. He must now apply that same ethos to helping our young people, and those needing to reskill, to get their education and future careers back on track. This is no time for penny-pinching on investing in this country’s most important asset – its people.

Ministers must work creatively with the FE sector and business to look beyond simply resourcing, to how they can reshape policies to boost the capacity for reskilling.

The apprenticeship levy

is long-known to be overly restrictive for employers to invest in skills. In a deep recession it would be unjustifiable and unacceptable for levy accounts to have millions of pounds of unused funding for skills that employers and colleges could not invest in because of bureaucratic rules long overdue for a reshake.

For example, why not allow employers to roll over and invest unused apprenticeship levy more widely in skills training? This could perhaps help existing staff to retrain to prevent unemployment, or support those being made redundant in refocusing their skills towards a new career.

Only by getting around the table with the sector, including training providers and employers, can the right approach be worked out. But there is no time to lose. Employers who are committed to the Social Mobility Pledge that I founded to spread more opportunity to young people and reach Britain’s much wider talent pool, are also keen to play their role. The government needs to work with them to find out how it can enable them to do so, or at least not get in the way.

We had a national effort to help our NHS as we were hit by the peak of the coronavirus crisis. We now need the same national effort to help our education system cope with its aftermath and the huge disruption to young people.

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
CONTACT US NEWS@FEWEEK.CO.UK



READER'S REPLY

Incorporation: The end of an experiment or the end of a myth?

Graham Ripley, website:

Putting merits to one side, it is clear that chairs and governing bodies did not join and offer their services pro bono for an organisation structured for the public sector. Such a change would provide an opportunity for chairs to steer and governors to decide if they wish to continue on that basis. The alternative being resignations on a significant scale, or payments on a level similar to an NHS trust board. (NHS trust chairs earn between £18.6k and £23.6k, with non-executive directors earning £6.2k to £10k.) Might also cause a rethink either alternative?

Monthly apprenticeships update: March starts fall 24 per cent and April plummets 72 per cent

Laura Milatos, Facebook

It's not a surprise, is it?

Labour hits out at government response to AELP's claim ESFA provider relief is 'unlawful'

Steve Lawrence, website

This is a time when they should go forward and do so for three reasons:

1. This may make them think they cannot ride rough-shod every time.
2. This is a clear item where the legal department do not know the whole process, eg ROTAP requirement by the ESFA, On Boarding by ESFA, requirement to undertake agreements laid down by ESFA, audits on funding by ESFA and also the IFA decides the price, agreed additional payments agreed via ESFA, requirements for EPA with agreed EPA authorised by ESFA and quality-checked by Ofsted, with the right of ESFA to take away a contract.
3. If this is so, the levy company should be able to spend how they like the funds if the ESFA do not control the contract.

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Incorporation: The end of an experiment or the end of a myth?

An interesting trawl back through all the names, acts and policies that one has forgotten over the years! The idea of collaboration at local and regional level is as old as the hills now and recurs almost as often as debates about parity between academic "gold standard" A-levels and vocational qualifications.

I remember Ofsted starting off down the road of a regional approach to inspections for a while – remember the Isle of Wight and Nottingham – and lots of talk of including "cradle-to-grave" institutions in those inspections. That didn't last for long though...

Richard Moore, website

Dawe quits AELP to lead training provider

Jo Abraham, Twitter:

Congratulations Mark. You will be missed! Thank you for all of your support over the past few years, you have been a fantastic voice for #FE #apprenticeships and #skills. I will particularly miss guessing what type of suit you will wear to the annual conference!

PM 'will look at the idea' of offering an 'apprenticeships guarantee'

Tracy Fishwick, Twitter:

The government doesn't create apprenticeships, employers do. And if those employers can't pay their wages, he can't guarantee it. We need a Youth Guarantee, which is more than apprenticeships.

Katy Dorman, Twitter:

@BorisJohnson great to hear your commitment to "look at anything", "work with employers" & "do absolutely everything we can" to take "exceptional steps to help our young people". I look forward to the plans for emerging support in the coming weeks.

Movers & Shakers

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



Anne Vickers

Board member,
Education Training
Collective

Start date May 2020

Concurrent job

Sport England and the Youth Sport Trust's Schools Games Organiser for Middlesbrough

Interesting fact

Anne played for Redcar Ladies hockey team for 30 years, joining when she was at school



Matthew Smith

Director of Digital Skills Academy, North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College

Start date May 2020

Previous job

Director of the National College of Education

Interesting fact

Matt was the principal dancer in the 2002-03 TV adaptation of The Forsyte Saga starring Damian Lewis



Janet Gardner

Principal, Waltham Forest College

Start date 31 July 2020

Previous job

Deputy Chief Executive, Newham College

Interesting fact

Janet has a keen interest in travelling and her most recent experience was a tour of the West Coast of America

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

FEWEEK

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