

FE Week White Paper guide

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The FE white paper included more than 30 proposals but the majority repeat or build on current reforms rather than announcing radically new ones. In this handy poster we explore the key points of the most significant and newest plans.

1 CREATE 'LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLANS' AND COLLEGE BUSINESS CENTRES

To ensure technical skills provision is "responsive to local labour market needs", the Department for Education will pilot "new Local Skills Improvement Plans" created by employers, colleges and training providers in trailblazer local areas in early 2021.

They will be led by accredited Chambers of Commerce and will see employers setting out a "credibly articulated and evidence-based assessment of skills needs to which providers will be empowered to respond". It is the DfE's "intention" to legislate to put the employer leadership of Local Skills Improvement Plans on a "statutory footing".

A £65 million Strategic Development Fund will be launched in 2021/22 to aid the plans and support providers to "reshape their provision to address local priorities that have been agreed with local employers".

Proposals will be invited through the Strategic Development Fund to establish "College Business Centres" within FE colleges, which will offer capital and revenue funding to help colleges "respond to locally agreed priorities".

2 NEW INTERVENTION 'POWERS'

The DfE says it will introduce new powers for the education secretary, so the government can "intervene quickly and decisively in cases where there are persistent problems that cannot otherwise be addressed, either with colleges not delivering effectively or where local providers are unable to deliver the skills priorities for that area".

Through legislation, this strengthened power would enable the education secretary to "intervene locally to close or set up college corporations, bring about changes to membership or composition of governing bodies or review leadership".

Use of these powers is "envisaged only as a last resort, where agreement has not been possible through other means and there are no alternative options for resolution".



3 STRENGTHENED GOVERNANCE

The DfE plans to set out clearer expectations, requirements and support for governors to "empower weaker colleges" to address problems earlier.

This will include refreshing existing guidance on appointments to communicate a clear government position on what constitutes good leadership, and make it clear that an "independent person" should be included on college leader interview panels to ensure "objectivity and due diligence".

There will also be new requirements for annual board self-assessment and regular external governance reviews, as well as consideration of the possibilities for enabling board chairs to be paid in "specific circumstances" within the confines of charity law.

4 POTENTIAL SWITCH TO OUTCOMES-BASED FUNDING

The government plans to reform the funding and accountability systems to "better support" providers by simplifying funding streams and giving providers more autonomy, such as by relaxing ringfences and reporting.

But the DfE will move to hold providers to account for the "outcomes that colleges are delivering to improve progression and respond to employer demand".

The DfE will consult on how they can "best assess" the performance of providers, building on the "new progression performance metrics being introduced and considering effectiveness of employer engagement, quality of provision and the



outcomes achieved, such as how well provision supports individuals to progress in their learning and secure good labour market outcomes".

By taking an outcome-focused approach, the department says providers will be "incentivised to review their provision to ensure it leads to meaningful employment for their learners, scaling back where there is an oversupply of provision and expanding other areas in line with agreed Local Skills Improvement Plans priorities".

5 MULTI-YEAR FUNDING TO BE CONSIDERED

The DfE says it wants to "give more certainty to providers"

over their funding, including considering how they could "move to a multi-year funding regime which is more forward-looking".

The idea would be subject to the government's spending review cycle, the white paper says, and does not give a timeframe of when this could be introduced.



6 IMPLEMENT THE FLEXIBLE LIFELONG LOAN ENTITLEMENT FROM 2025

As part of the previously announced lifetime skills guarantee, which is enshrined in the white paper, the government plans to launch a lifelong loan entitlement.

The DfE describes this as "new transformative funding provision", enabling people to access four years' worth of student loan funding across further and higher education providers throughout their lifetime.

Details of this new policy will be consulted on in 2021, but it will not be rolled out until at least after the next general election.



7 CENTRAL ROLE FOR EMPLOYERS TO DESIGN TECHNICAL COURSES

The white paper pledges to give employers a "central role" in designing "almost all" technical courses by 2030, to "ensure that the education and training people receive is directly linked to the skills needed for real jobs".

This will include aligning the "substantial majority" of post-16 level 4 and 5 qualifications to employer-led standards set by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, as is the case for apprenticeships.

8 NEW NATIONAL TEACHER RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN

"Significant new investment" to improve the FE workforce will be provided in 2021/22.

This will include a "nationwide recruitment campaign to get more talented individuals to teach in further education and investing in high-quality professional development including a new Workforce Industry Exchange Programme".

The campaign, expected to be launched this year, would "reach millions of prospective teaching staff, targeting those with experience and skills in industry, who can train the next generation of technical experts".

The campaign would direct potential teachers to a new 'Teach in Further Education' platform, which, alongside a dedicated telephone helpline, will give potential applicants "all they need to take the next step into teaching, with information on how to access relevant training, for example the Taking Teaching Further programme, and financial incentives such as training bursaries".

It will also signpost current vacancies and help existing teachers and lecturers find professional development opportunities.



PLANS FOLLOWING THE WHITE PAPER – A TIMELINE

