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'WHAT'S NEEDED IS MORE, NOT LESS DEVOLUTION'



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- CIFE now seeks industry funders to 'influence at the highest levels of government'
- First published report calls for better FE collaboration with construction sector
- Individuals will be able to apply to be awarded 'associate fellowships' like in HE

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Fastest growing apprenticeship provider goes bust amid ESFA investigation

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Exclusive

England's fastest growing apprenticeship provider has gone bust amid a government investigation into the speed and scale of its recruitment.

Logistics.com (UK) Ltd filed for insolvency last month with close to £1 million debts, after the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) banned new apprenticeship starts and stopped making monthly payments in November.

The company was unable to pay its 86 staff at the end of February and stopped trading. About 1,250 apprentices now need to find a new provider.

Logistics was a small freight company that became an apprenticeship provider in March last year. It changed ownership at the same time.

As previously reported by *FE Week*, the company recruited more apprentices in the following eight months than any other provider. The learners mostly worked in nursing homes and would have earned Logistics an estimated £5 million.

Begbies Traynor, a company specialising in corporate restructuring, has been appointed as the administrator.

Lead liquidator Scott Kippax told *FE Week*: "The key reason for liquidation was that the ESFA had stopped payments. They had employees that were due their salary at the end of February and they didn't have any money to pay it. That was the straw that broke the camel's back and brought us in."

"They [the owners] were trying to liaise with the ESFA to get it resolved, but they weren't having it."

The ESFA and owners of Logistics have remained tight-lipped about the specifics of the investigation.

Kippax continued: "I want to find out from the ESFA why they are being investigated. They do not do these things



lightly because that brought the company down - there must be reasons for it with substantial evidence."

The company's books show it is owed more than £1 million from the ESFA, going back over four months.

A statement of affairs about the liquidation on Companies House shows that Logistics owes £915,000 to 32 creditors.

Kippax said he will investigate the conduct of the owners as part of the liquidation.

The company was taken over by Dominic Davies in March 2020 shortly after the provider's acceptance to the register of apprenticeship training providers.

His then business partner, Stephen Banks - who, like Davies, worked at the well-known but now-liquidated training provider Middleton Murray - played a key role in its operation.

The pair incorporated several businesses over last summer.

Banks also became the new owner of the single employee 5 Stars Recruitment Ltd in October last year - three months after it was added to the apprenticeship providers' register on July 29.

However, Companies House shows that he resigned from 5 Stars in February amid

the ESFA's investigation into Logistics.

Both Davies and Banks did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Logistics rapid growth followed the owners' purchase of sales leads and their establishment of partnerships with at least one NHS trust to offer free apprenticeship training to large and small employers, funded from levy transfers.

Government policy is that large employers, such as councils and NHS trusts, can share up to 25 per cent of their unspent levy funding each year with training providers to deliver the apprenticeships to small employers - administered via the online apprenticeship system.

The use of transferred funding was key to ESFA fully funding Logistics.com (UK) as it released employers from the usual 5 per cent co-investment fee.

The ESFA said it did not comment on investigations, but confirmed it was aware that Logistics had gone into liquidation.

"The ESFA is working to support any learners affected to ensure the continuation of their learning in line with each individual's progress to date," a spokesperson said.



Dominic Davies

Flexi-job plans may force closure of some ATAs, DfE is warned

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Exclusive

The government has been warned that many apprenticeship training agencies (ATAs) will close down under plans for new flexi-job apprenticeships.

A consultation launched on Tuesday about making all 111 ATAs apply to a new register of approved flexi-job apprenticeship schemes also has one agency boss worried that it could put learners at a disadvantage when seeking a job.

Humber ATA chief executive Iain Elliott said the government should “be very careful that you’re not throwing the baby out with the bathwater”.

Apprenticeship training agencies launched in 2009 to hire apprentices and then place them with a host company that would pay the agency to cover the salaries and administration costs.

Flexi-job apprenticeships were announced by chancellor Rishi Sunak in his Budget in March to help industries where project-based employment is the norm.

This practice means employers, in sectors such as creative, agriculture and construction, struggle with the 12-month minimum apprenticeship rule.

But Elliott said the proposals, which include £7 million to start new agencies to place apprentices with multiple employers, could lead to ATAs “ceasing to exist”.

His agency operates a “more traditional model”, with apprentices assigned to one employer, so he worries that the new register could stop them working in their usual way.

“Is the DfE saying they need you to reapply because ‘we need a better register, we need more control. If you want to do flexi-jobs, great. If you just want to stick to the model that you’ve been operating, then that’s fine?’”

But “if they stop some ATAs from operating, what they’re probably going to end up doing is disadvantaging both employers and young



people from getting a job”.

David Marsh, chief executive of leading apprenticeship provider Babington, also worries learners could lose jobs with ATAs in the switchover from the current, dormant register of agencies.

“I think the transition to this for current ATAs needs to be managed very carefully as apprentices are already employed by them, or have job offers to join them imminently,” he said.

He also warned the Department for Education (DfE) announcement will “raise a high level of risk for these learners that their ATA could not exist in the future due to the unknown register refresh”.

A formal launch of the new flexi-job apprenticeships scheme is scheduled for next January.

Both Marsh and Elliott voiced support for the idea of flexi-job apprenticeships, with Elliott saying: “Any scheme that gets more apprentices through those industries has got to be welcomed.”

Marsh has suggested it “would be sensible for the Education and Skills Funding Agency to automatically include any current ATAs into the new register to ensure consistency of employment for these apprentices and reduce more uncertainty”.

The register of ATAs has been in place since

2012 but shut to new applications in 2018.

The DfE has since become concerned new and existing ATAs were running without monitoring or oversight arrangements.

The DfE’s consultation document reads: “We will also develop a process for monitoring and assuring the compliance of approved flexi-job apprenticeship schemes with the conditions of entry to the register.”

They will also consider if flexi-job schemes “should have to apply to alter the terms of their entry on the register – for example, if they wish to offer a wider range of apprenticeship standards”.

But the process ATAs underwent for the original register “was very stringent,” says Marsh, “so as long as their basics, like financials, are still in place”, then their place on the new register “needs to be confirmed very quickly to reduce uncertainty”.

Elliott added: “If you’ve got concerns about the way some ATAs are operating, then just take them off the register.”

Only ATAs on the new register will be able to access funding from the £7 million pot, the DfE has said. Applicants will be invited to join the register from July 2021.

A DfE spokesperson said: “We have launched the consultation precisely so we can hear views from existing ATAs about the future operating framework and we would encourage organisations to respond.”



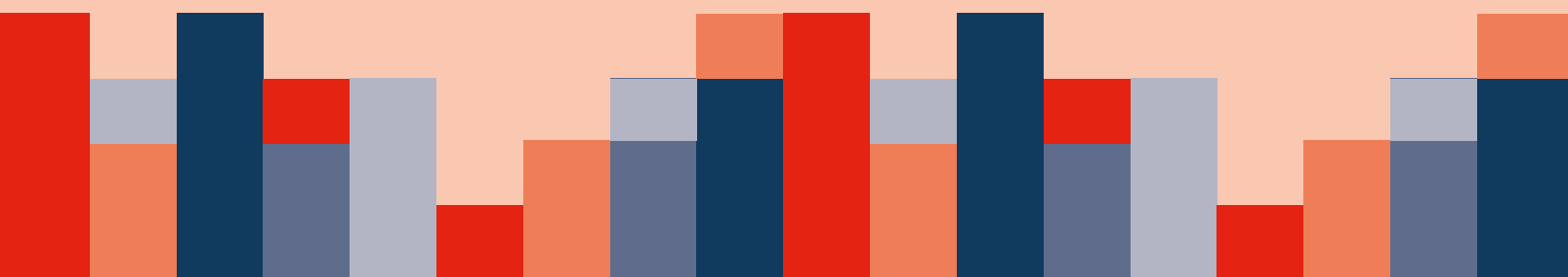
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As we launch our Aspiration Awards for 2021 (which is open to schools, colleges and training organisations), we caught up with a previous Aspiration Awards winner, 3 years on, to find out how winning one of these awards encouraged her to continue with education and progress to who she is today.

Emma's story

Emma Owen, a learner at Everton Free School, was awarded Learner of the Year in our 2018 Aspiration Awards. We were delighted to announce Emma as our winner - after a tough start and expulsions from previous schools, she had re-engaged with education to reach her potential. Her resilient and determined nature set her on course for a bright future.

Fast-forward three years and Emma has accomplished an impressive amount. Now in her third and final year of college, she has received offers



for all three universities she applied to and is aspiring to begin a degree apprenticeship later this year.

Emma said: "Education wasn't really something I enjoyed prior to studying at Everton Free School. I would find myself caught up in work that I had no intention of completing, purely because of demotivation. I often resorted to bad behaviour as a way of making school less boring and I never really believed that I could achieve anything based on how little I enjoyed going to school.

"After switching schools and studying more practical qualifications, I started to enjoy my time in education and was more motivated to learn. Every teacher, employee and senior management member at my school provided learners with an environment filled with laughter, resilience and livelihood, all of which I believe creates an extremely positive place to learn. Whilst they understand the importance of managing challenging behaviour, they also ensure that meaningful, trustworthy relationships are built with learners in an attempt to make their learning more enjoyable; I know I certainly enjoyed every minute I was there because of this!

"The V Cert qualification from NCFE was fantastic and really made a positive difference to my life. It helped build my relationship with my mum as I involved her in my learning, improving my studies and my home life. Without the variety

of skills that I gained at Everton and through completing the NCFE qualification, I wouldn't have believed in myself enough to go onto university. Winning the Learner of the Year award was one of the many highlights during my school years and it encouraged me to continue with my education."

This year's awards

Our Aspiration Awards are open to learners, schools, colleges and training providers, providing opportunities for recognition across the sector.

The four categories are: teacher/tutor of the year, centre of the year, learner of the year and a category named 'against all odds'.

Every year we look forward to the nominations rolling in and reading about the exceptional things going on within the sector. It's the drive and passion of those working in the education sector that make our job worthwhile, and the success of learners that is our inspiration. As an educational charity, our core purpose to 'promote and advance learning' is at the heart of all we do - and celebrating our learners' many and varied achievements is a key part of this.

Applications for the 2021 Aspiration Awards are open until Friday 11 June and can be made at ncte.org.uk/aspiration-awards

Chartered Institution 'opens new chapter' as an independent body

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From front

Exclusive

"If you are funded by government, you can't use your voice in the same way, you're influenced in a certain way," says deputy chair Dawn Ward as she describes the "importance" of the Chartered Institution for Further Education (CIFE) becoming independent.

Supported by former skills minister John Hayes in 2013 to grant chartered status to FE providers, the institution was subsidised by the Department for Education to the tune of £1.7 million before financial support ended in 2019.

At that point its first chief executive, Dan Wright, stood down and with no replacement appointed, responsibility for running the institution fell to its council.

"The pilot is now looking at what is needed to be put in place to recognise associate fellows"

The body has since undertaken a "strategic review", led by former college principal and independent council member Lesley Davies, who devised a plan for the institution to be self-sustaining for an "exciting new chapter".

Speaking exclusively to *FE Week*, Ward, who has played a leading role at the institution since its conception, alongside her job as principal of Burton and South Derbyshire College, says that now the Covid-19 pandemic is easing, it is ready to officially "relaunch".



The Chartered Institution for Further Education's inaugural admissions ceremony in the House of Lords in 2016

Key to its operation going forward will be funding from industry to conduct research that "enables us to use our unified voice to influence at the highest levels of government and to collaborate and share best practice".

Its first report, which was funded by property company St Modwen Homes and focused on the "importance of securing future skills" for the construction industry, launched this week on Thursday at London South East Colleges group at an event attended by skills minister Gillian Keegan.

The institution has several other potential research projects in the works, including in the hospitality sector, that they hope to launch over the next year.

Awarding of associate fellowships will also be key new feature of the CIFE.

In previous years, the institution has handed out a number of honorary fellowships, with recipients including Ann Limb, Sir Geoff Hall, Sir John Hayes, David Sherlock and Chris Humphries.

Ward says associate fellows are the "norm" in higher education and their introduction to the FE sector will help

"better recognise the professional status of the many FE industry specialists".

Individuals, such as college and training provider leaders and chairs, will be able to apply for the associate fellowships but will have to demonstrate they meet the criteria of a new framework.

The framework is currently being piloted with three members and five non-members to ensure it fits "what the sector needs".

Ward explained that the framework has a "particular focus" on "dual professionalism" and it will "recognise the industrial updating of technical and professional educators in FE".

Ward explains: "The pilot is now looking at what is needed to be put in place to recognise associate fellows, so what evidence will we need.

"So it's not just about saying, tick, somebody has been into industry for a week, it will be looking at what evidence will they need within a framework to evidence that there has been an impact of what they've done. It will include a

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reflective piece.”

Ward said that both these elements – industry research and associate fellowships – will be “key features of the relaunched, independent Institution and will support the charter’s mission to raise recognition and esteem of FE within the wider education sector”.

Growing membership of providers with chartered status will also be key to the institution’s sustainability.

At Thursday’s construction report launch, chair of the institution Lord Lingfield said one of his top priorities is to become known as the “Russell Group of FE – a group of the most distinguished colleges and providers in the country”.

“What’s really important is that we grow the value that we give”

It currently has 15 members, who pay an annual subscription fee of £5,000. The latest member to join was the TEC Partnership, in summer 2019.

Ward says the institution has a number of other FE providers “looking to apply



CIFE construction report launch. From left: Chair Lord Lingfield, London South East Colleges chief executive Sam Parrett and skills minister Gillian Keegan

this year”. Interested parties must pay a £3,000 non-refundable fee to have an application reviewed.

The institution’s former chief executive, Dan Wright, previously said that it would need around 80 members in order to continue without government subsidy.

But with income now expected to also come from industry, the institution isn’t setting a membership target.

“Part of our business plan is obviously about growing membership. But in the same way, if you go back to when I57 Group started years ago, it’s not about having set targets, it’s about that evolution as it goes through,” Ward said.

“What’s really important is that we grow the value that we give.”

But Ward is hopeful that “every” college and

FE training provider can achieve chartered status: “You have chartered engineers and accountants, it means something to industry, so it is really, really important for FE.”

The institution’s council is currently led by chair Lord Lingfield and deputy chair Ward. It is made up of nine other council members and has undergone a bit of a refresh over the past year.

New appointments include London South East Colleges chief executive Sam Parrett, Burton and South Derbyshire College governor Rajinder Mann, Working Men’s College principal Helen Hammond and Hawk Training managing director Crawford Knott.

But while the institution is being run by the council at the moment, with the assistance of a secretariat, Ward says they are looking to appoint a new chief executive to replace Wright. “Our plan is to grow incrementally, and we will look to appoint somebody to take us forward on the next steps,” Ward said.

“That will be about growing our strategies as an independent charter that has been developed by the new council.”

The institution is not planning a physical relaunch, but says it will announce further detail on its plans going forward in July, once its next council meeting has taken place.

They will also be holding another admissions and fellowship ceremony at some point, once applications have been reviewed and Covid restrictions allow.



The Chartered Institution for Further Education & St Modwen Properties PLC
CIFE deputy chair Dawn Ward presenting the institution’s new construction report

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MPs and Lords back Hinds' move for an all-party group to champion T Levels

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T Levels will get a boost this month with the creation of a cross-party group of MPs and peers to champion them.

Damian Hinds, who oversaw the qualification's development while education secretary from January 2018 to July 2019, is behind the all-party parliamentary group (APPG) and has put himself forward as chair.

It is funded by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF), The Gatsby Foundation, and engineering multinational AECOM.

MPs and members of the House of Lords are set to meet next Tuesday to elect a chair. Skills minister Gillian Keegan cannot be a member, but is set to attend the inaugural meeting.

Speaking to *FE Week*, Hinds said parliamentarians had a "big interest" in how T Levels would be "increasing in geographical footprint around the country in the next few years, as well as getting into more subjects".

On how the group came together, he cited his "very strong personal interest" in T Levels as an "important initiative" so he "personally wanted us to have an all-party group for a while".

Prominent parliamentarians who have signed up to join include former Labour education secretaries David Blunkett and Estelle Morris, and education select committee members Ian Mearns, Jonathan Gullis and Christian Wakeford.

The prospective group members have agreed to focus on: "Matching to the technical skills UK businesses need now and in future; the role T Levels can play in improving social mobility and workplace diversity; and the link-up with wider technical/vocational routes and career paths".

Hinds said the group would particularly focus on events and "bringing parliamentarians together to hear more



Damian Hinds

about T Levels".

It also wanted to hear from T Level students and "critically we want to hear from industry".

APPGs are informal groups that focus on specific countries or policy issues. External organisations typically fund a secretariat for an APPG.

They have come under increasing scrutiny in recent years, with the Committee on Standards launching an inquiry last October into the "transparency and appropriateness of funding of APPG activities and secretarial support".

Hinds said the funding organisations were "three very strong partners to have for this group and come at it from slightly different perspectives".

Quizzed on the rollout of T Levels, he defended the government's decision not to set fixed targets for student numbers.

FE Week previously reported the DfE had only set estimates, which its latest T Level action plan from January showed it had not met.

The lack of fixed targets was criticised by former skills minister John Hayes at a Westminster Education Forum webcast last month. He said targets were vital to "gauge success". He had "never bought the argument" there could not be an equal focus on quality and quantity when rolling schemes out.

Hinds said "integrity is what this is all about", but he was confident the numbers of students, providers, and subjects involved in T Levels would increase over time.

The East Hampshire MP "would not wish it on anybody for the timing to fall where it did", as T Levels rolled out during the Covid-19 pandemic.

But he "100 per cent, absolutely" stuck by his decision to issue a ministerial direction in May 2018 committing the qualifications to roll out last autumn.

This was despite the DfE's then-permanent secretary Jonathan Slater asking for a year's delay, as a 2020 start date would be "very challenging".

Khan slams mayoral exclusion from local skills improvement plan pilots

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From front

Exclusive

Sadiq Khan has slammed the government for cutting mayoral authorities out from leading new local skills improvement plans (LSIPs) pilots.

Employer representative bodies were this week asked to come forward to spearhead trials of the policy that are central to the FE white paper reforms.

The plans will aim to make colleges align the courses they offer to local employers' needs and are hoped to address concerns that businesses do not currently have enough influence over the skills provision offered in their area.

Bids for the pilot require a "lead" that must be an "employer representative body". Controversially, the Department for Education says it does "not consider mayoral combined authorities, local enterprise partnerships and skills advisory panels to be business representative organisations, so they are not eligible".

This is despite MCAs and LEPs having already created their own skills plans in recent years following devolution of the adult education budget.

London mayor Sadiq Khan lambasted the exclusion. "It's a disappointment that the Department for Education has decided to cut City Hall out from leading the pilot of new local skills improvement plans," a spokesperson for London Labour and the mayor told *FE Week*.

"Since Sadiq was elected he has worked efficiently with businesses, providers, boroughs and national agencies to deliver on the adult education budget. What is needed is more, not less, devolution."

The spokesperson added that local businesses have an "important role" to play in delivering the new LSIPs but this "should be done in

partnership with the Mayor of London".

"Established" employer representative bodies can include chambers of commerce and membership organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry.

The plans will be piloted in six to eight trailblazer areas this year, backed with £4 million in revenue funding. The funding must be spent by the end of March 2022.

Jane Gratton, head of people policy at the British Chambers of Commerce, said she is "confident" that accredited chambers of commerce across the country are "well placed to play a leading role in developing these robust skills plans".

"If delivered in full, these plans will put businesses on the front foot in training their workforce, providing a welcome boost to national productivity," she added.

In application guidance published on Tuesday, the DfE said the plans will "set out the key changes needed to make technical skills training more responsive to employers' skills needs within a local area".

They should be created in collaboration with colleges and training providers, with employers "setting out a credible and

evidence-based assessment of their skills needs, to which providers will be empowered to respond".

Keith Smith, director for post-16 strategy at the Department for Education, told an *FE Week* webcast last month that new legislation is being worked on to enable the education secretary to intervene where colleges refuse to deliver courses decided through LSIPs.

While MCAs and LEPs cannot lead the pilots, the DfE's guidance does say they will "have an important role to play in developing" the plans and should be consulted by the employer representative bodies.

The West Midlands Combined Authority, currently led by Conservative mayor Andy Street, was upbeat about their potential. "We hope that the pilots enable further innovation in the sector to ensure that flexible skills delivery is at the heart of our economic recovery," a spokesperson from the authority said.

"As the main commissioners of adult skills funding, we will be keen to learn from other pilots."

Similarly, chief executive of the LEP Network Mark Livesey welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the pilots, even if his members couldn't lead them.

"Although LEPs are not able to apply directly for these pilots, bodies intending to submit local skills improvement plans would certainly be wise to utilise the impartial expertise and brokering capability of LEPs and their DfE-backed skills advisory panels if they are to replicate the depth of knowledge and experience of local skills needs, as well as connect with the many businesses who are not members of employer representative bodies," he said.

Expressions of interest are being sought until May 25. Bids must be submitted via email to Skills.Accelerator@education.gov.uk



Sadiq Khan

Colleges invited to bid for £65m Strategic Development Fund pilot

BILLY CAMDEN

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A new fund that aims to force college collaboration has opened for bids.

Colleges can now tender to pilot the Strategic Development Fund, which was first mooted in this year's FE white paper and backed with £65 million.

It is part of the government's newly named "Skills Accelerator" programme, which also incorporates local skills improvement plans set to be piloted this year.

Both pilots will aim to tackle ministers' concerns of "skills mismatches" when it comes to the provision offered by colleges and training providers in local areas to the detriment of employers.

The government wants 12 to 16 areas to pilot the Strategic Development Fund. The funding, which will consist of 60 per cent (£38 million) for capital and 40 per cent (£27 million) for revenue, must be used by March 2022.

Welcoming the fund, Association of Colleges chief executive David Hughes said: "The prospectus will deliver new and very welcome investment for colleges to shape their skills offer and their leadership working with other colleges and employers in their communities.

"We want this to be just the first step towards a more collaborative system and to give confidence to government that colleges can deliver when investment is available."

In the fund's application guidance, it says the aim of the pilot is to "begin building the local collaborations that will create a stronger and more efficient overall delivery infrastructure and support a more co-ordinated offer across the local area".

They will also "support the development of a high-value curriculum offer in support of longer-term skills priorities" in a local area and "strengthen the relationship with



employers".

Each bid must be submitted by an Ofsted grade one or two college as a lead applicant which "must consult" with all colleges in the area and "invite them to join the collaboration".

And where a college in an area does not wish to become a member of the pilot, the lead college "must confirm that the institution has been provided with an opportunity to join the collaboration and the rationale for them wishing to remain outside of it".

Independent training providers are not permitted to be a lead provider but can be a member of the collaboration.

The proposals "must" provide a "clear justification for the collaboration membership and a high-level outline of the individual contribution of each member".

Bids can also involve the creation of new college business centres, which were also proposed in the white paper.

Located in one of the colleges within the collaboration but acting as a "shared resource", the business centres can "enable a strategic response to the needs of a priority local sector and play a pivotal role in connecting employers to the technical

expertise and facilities of the collaboration as a whole", the DfE said.

Proposals for college business centres should "specialise in a local priority sector whose employers would benefit from support to help them better understand and anticipate skills needs, and to make better use of the skills of their workforce.

"They would also be expected to communicate information about the sector's evolving skill requirements to the providers within the collaboration, facilitating the development of and access to provision which is more closely aligned to the evolving skill needs of the sector."

The DfE said it anticipates a "small number" of college business centres across the Strategic Development Fund pilot areas and does not expect every bid to include one.

Applications must be made by May 25, 2021 by emailing Skills.Accelerator@education.gov.uk

No timeframe for when the pilots will formally launch has been provided.

Despite the tight timeframe for spending the funding, Hughes said "we know colleges will be able to deliver".

Skills bootcamp £36m tender hit by 'worrying' delay

BILLY CAMDEN

BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Exclusive

The results of the government's national skills bootcamp tender have been hit by a "very worrying" delay.

Contracts were supposed to start from this month, but training providers who bid for a slice of the £36 million that is up for grabs are yet to be told whether they have been successful.

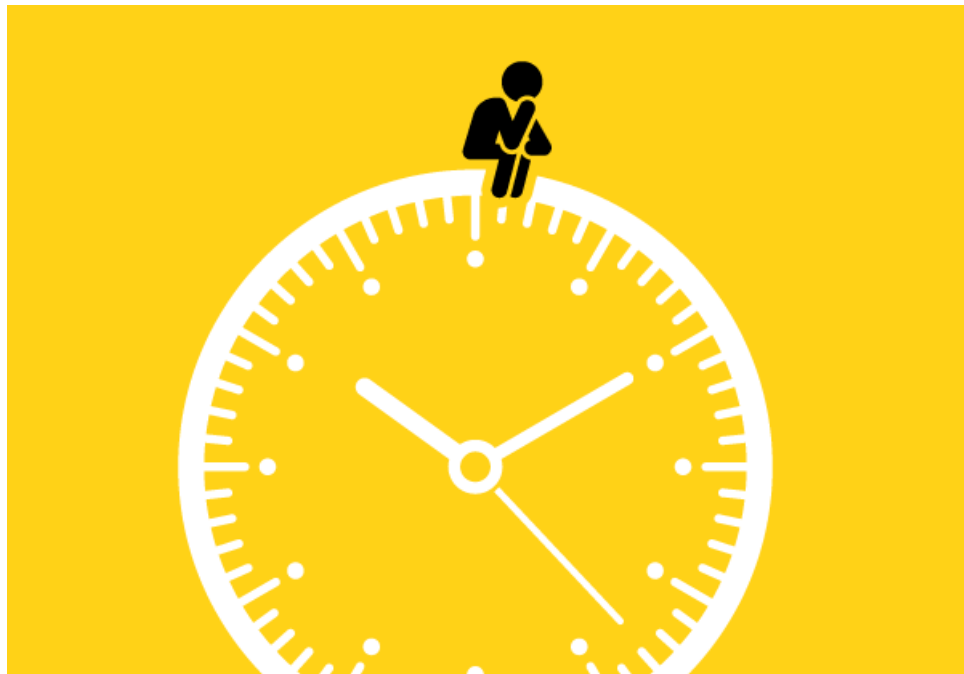
The Department for Education said that due to the "high volume" of bids received, the period for "tender evaluation" has "had to be extended".

"Suppliers have already been informed of this delay and we will announce the successful bids in due course," a spokesperson added.

A "mobilisation" period had been set to take place over the next month, with commencement of actual course delivery starting by "latest June 2021" – a timeline that is now at risk.

There are growing concerns about the limited time providers will have in which to spend the funding, since it must be used by the end of March 2022.

Association of Employment and Learning Providers chief executive Jane Hickie said: "If it goes on much longer, AELP members



would find this delay very worrying in terms of being able to start delivery next month and to deliver the expected outcomes in the projected 12-month contract period."

She added that given the "recent track-record" on missed procurement outcome deadlines, an "even bigger worry" would be a delay in announcing the adult education budget procured contracts for 2021-22.

"We really can't afford to see this happen when we are supposed to be supporting adult learners affected by the pandemic's impact."

Ramping up of technical skills bootcamps is part of the prime minister's lifetime skills guarantee.

Paid for from the new National Skills Fund, the DfE launched two tenders for level 3-plus "bootcamp" courses in January.

Courses lead to guaranteed job interviews and are for adults aged 19 and over. They will run for up to 16 weeks and will be free to unemployed people, or where employed, their employer would pay a 30 per cent cash contribution.

The "digital skills bootcamps" tender, known as lot 1, sought bids for courses in IT subjects such as cloud computing, data engineering and software development.

The "technical and cross-digital skills bootcamps" tender, known as lot 2, sought bids for courses in subjects such as electrotechnical, welding, engineering, construction and electronics.

"We really can't afford to see this happen when we are supposed to be supporting adult learners"

It comes after two waves of bootcamp pilot schemes, each worth £4 million, were commissioned in the West Midlands, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Liverpool City Region, Heart of the South West, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and Leeds City Region.

They feature training for digital skills as well as industries including welding, engineering and construction.

The DfE said the pilots are still running and will "deliver approximately 1,300 more skills bootcamp places from April".



Jane Hickie



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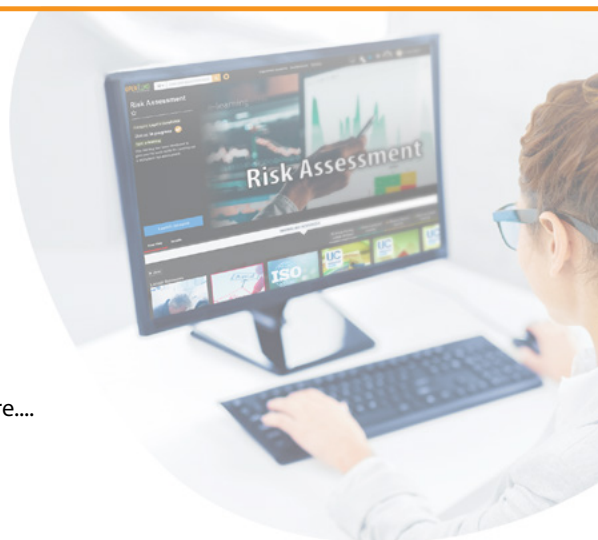
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1.0 Lecturer Coordinator - Programming & System Development (RS20/21/337) - Permanent position from August 2021

0.4 Lecturer Coordinator in Uniformed Public Services (RS20/21/320) – Permanent position from Sept 2021

0.4 Lecturer Coordinator in Access to HE (RS20/21/335) – Permanent position from Sept 2021

0.4 Lecturer Coordinator in Early Years (RS20/21/336) – Permanent position from Sept 2021

Grade: Harmonised Pay Scale Points 15 – 35 (£18,684.00 – £33,313.00 per annum/pro rata)

Some positions may be open to job share (please request with application)

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Inclusion Manager – RS20/21/293 - Permanent position from June 2021 (37 hours per week)

Grade: Harmonised pay scale points 15 – 35 (£18,684.00 – £33,313.00 per annum)

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NCD ESF Business Development Advisor (RS20/21/298) – Temporary position until June 2023

Fixed point 30 (£28,789.00 per annum)

NCD ESF Sector Specialist - Digital (RS20/21/299) – Temporary position until Sept 2022

Fixed point 30 (£28,789.00 per annum)

NCD ESF Sector Specialist – Catering & Tourism (RS20/21/300)– Temporary position until Sept 2022 Fixed point 30 (£28,789.00 per annum)

NCD ESF Sector Specialist – Early Years (RS20/21/301)– Temporary position until Sept 2022

Fixed point 30 (£28,789.00 per annum)

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For further details and an application form please email katie.hinch@bacoll.ac.uk, visit our website www.bacoll.ac.uk or contact our 24-hour answering service on **01388 443038**.

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'An intellectual engine, by the sector, for the sector'

JESS STAUFENBERG
@STAUFENBERGJ

The Further Education Trust for Leadership think tank will close this year. Should the model be replicated? **Jess Staufenberg** finds out

“Do we need an independent think tank for further education?” That’s the question that will be posed in a webinar next week by perhaps the only organisation that could claim to be exactly that.

The Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL), will then close its doors forever.

It's been seven-and-a-half years since the think tank set up with £5.6 million in the bank, handing out the public funds for some quite extraordinary projects.

Unlike the Education and Training Foundation (ETF), it has not been closely

associated with the government and has enjoyed a huge degree of freedom over its chosen projects. Unlike think tanks such as The Edge Foundation or EDSK, it focused on FE and college leaders – not the broader skills or education landscape. Does FE need a replacement for FETL? If so, what exactly is being replaced?

FETL's beginnings are as gutsy – and slightly surreal – as its founding force, Dame Ruth Silver, a former child psychologist and principal of Lewisham College in south London for 17 years.

Silver, who retired from the college in 2011, had been chair of the government-funded Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) since it was set up in 2008.

But in 2013 the coalition government cut ties with LSIS, moving monies to the ETF.

Silver was “furious”, she says, and, quite unbelievably, succeeded in hanging on to

about £2 million (£2,099,743, to be precise) still in the LSIS kitty, with £2.7 million from the Inspire Leadership group, a staff development organisation, and £811,000 from Lifelong Learning UK, another professional development body.

“Normally, you’d turn to the government and say, ‘take the money back’, but we were semi-independent, and as long as we respected the charitable objects [of LSIS], we decided we could set something else up,” she says, adding that “a lot of people came after” the money.

But she held firm and asked the sector what it wanted. When she proposed a think tank to civil servants they said “the minister won’t like it”, to which she says she responded, “well that’s sad, but it’s none of his business”.

With the intention to run until the money ran

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out, FETL was born

The founding trustees had some big names, including Sean Larkins, a deputy director of communications in the Prime Minister's Office, Toni Pearce, the first FE student to lead the National Union of Students, and Ayub Khan, a former local authorities strategist in London.

“The essays were closer to polemic, rather than deeply researched”

Other sector specialists such as Jill Westerman, the former chief executive at the Northern College, and Denise Brown, now principal at Stoke on Trent College, remain on the board, alongside FETL chair and a former trustee at LSIS, Ricky McMenemy, who runs the famous Rules restaurant in Covent Garden, London.

The organisation held a board meeting this week, and *FE Week* understands an unconfirmed “dowry” left in the kitty will be bequeathed to a deserving organisation.

A surplus of £560,000 was carried into 2020-21, according to the latest accounts. The question is whether FETL's inheritor should seek to replicate its model, or do something different.

FETL's strapline is “to foster and support the leadership of thinking”.

Silver unpacks this with the equally rich explanation: “It's about the leader in the system, and the system in the leader.” The remit seems to draw on Silver's own experiences – as a principal she was given a sabbatical at the University of Cambridge. “Ruth had that wonderful opportunity and she said it had completely invigorated her. So that's what we were trying to do at the start,” McMenemy says.

The idea was to fund FE practitioners to take time out to do research. “We felt the sector

didn't have enough time to breathe, to see what was necessary to carry itself forward and improve its status,” McMenemy says.

But he and Silver are honest the initial model didn't quite work.

“That just wasn't fit for purpose,” Silver says. “FE doesn't have the practice of a sabbatical. People couldn't get the time off.” She's equally frank about problems with another idea: to fund the first “professor of leadership in FE and skills” at UCL Institute of Education.

Martin Doel was appointed, a former chief executive of the Association of Colleges who had come up through the Royal Air Force.

“It put someone with an intimate knowledge of FE inside the world's leading research institute,” Doel says.

In his four-day week he ran multiple seminars and produced essays, including “Rethinking Place and Purpose: Provocations on the Future of FE”, which pulled together roundtable responses from colleges. Would a professorship have been better spent on a

hard-hitting research project?

“I'm quite pleased I didn't get wound up in quantitative research, because that could have been quite narrow. I'm proud of keeping my focus on broader, conceptual issues in further education, and drawing people's attention to these.” The essays were “closer to a polemic, than highly referenced and deeply researched”.

This approach meant “there was a bit of tension early on about whether we should be getting published in academic journals”, he says.

“FETL quite properly concluded the target wasn't to get published in journals, but to affect the thinking of people working now”.

UCL kept Doel on as a visiting professor after his three-year post came to an end.

Silver is clear the professorship didn't quite work, in part because FETL was at risk of “mimicry” by prioritising access to higher education rather than “practitioners in the field”.

The decision to move away from formal research towards “provocations” – polemic thought-pieces – would become the cornerstone of FETL's approach, turbo-charged by Silver as leader.

Its first chief executive, Mark Ravenhall, formerly from the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, had stepped down in 2015 as had its second, Khan, in 2017.

The board now moved to pay Silver as a consultant from late 2018, on £800 a day for up to three days a week.



Symposiums funded by FETL



Ricky McMenemy

Martin Doel

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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McMenemy explains what could be regarded as the controversial decision not to appoint another chief executive, and instead pay the president on contract.

"We thought, we will do without a chief executive. The person who had FETL in her DNA was Ruth, she understood more about it than any of us. We spoke to her about an 'honorary' payment where she would start to manage all the projects."

The organisation funded an extraordinary amount of work: 42 project grants, 82 publications, 84 videos, nine webinars and 12 larger-scale symposiums.

"We said no to people wanting to do projects with a qualification at the end"

It supported the Independent College of the Future report, the Centenary Commission on Adult Education and a four nations report by the Institute for Public Policy Research. It asked questions no one had asked before – papers such as "What's Oedipus got to do with it?" looked at the "problem of triangular relationships" in senior leadership teams.

Another considered "how psychoanalysis and systems theory" can contribute to FE, reminding leaders to examine their own "internal drivers". Like Doel's work, many publications are polemics, freed from the constraints of formal academic research.

Instead, the trustee board's entry requirements were more intuitive.

"We said no to people wanting to do

research projects with a qualification at the end – this was not about passing exams. And we said no to things we'd looked at before," Silver says.

"We said to the sector, come to us with your ideas," McMenemy explains. FETL funded eight fellowships, allowing FE staff to pursue a line of inquiry that interests them.

Stuart Rimmer, the principal of East Coast College in Suffolk, delved into distress in leadership, speaking to nearly 100 practitioners for his "Voices from the tightrope" paper.

Here FETL's unique selling point can really be seen. "It's allowed individuals to pursue intellectual curiosity. We ended up finding really interesting things, sometimes in marginal topics, that wouldn't otherwise attract big research funding," Rimmer says.

Other projects were thought up by the board itself, McMenemy says. This year the "Honorable Histories" report surveyed 30 years of FE policy and its impact.

The New Local, an organisation for councils, was funded to examine the "piecemeal nature of English devolution" while a report called "The Way We Work" looked at the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. The very toughest topics have been tackled: the public "shaming" of college

leaders, and the way national media overlooks further

education.

In a way, the risk of being overlooked has been perhaps FETL's main weakness.

The nature of its work hasn't always generated the national media headlines, or impacted Whitehall policy, in the way it might have.

Doel describes FETL as "more of a reflection and intellectual engine than a think tank - by the sector about the sector".

But did FETL impact outside FE? Should it have focused more on funding and findings? Rimmer says FE didn't need a "proliferation of data" but instead a "proliferation of thinking" – an intellectual backdrop for future research to build upon.

Now the British Library and UCL want to add FETL's materials to their archives. Doel says: "There's already such a rich literature on schools, which gives them a framework in which to work. We needed FETL to come first."

When it's wound up in December, FETL says it will know how much cash it has left and will decide where to bequeath it.

A think tank that can combine FETL's rich, anthropological groundwork, with much harder-hitting, outward-facing recommendations, could be a powerhouse replacement. Rimmer says: "It's been a worthy vehicle. I would like to see a continuation."



Symposiums funded by FETL



Stuart Rimmer



Ruth Silver



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JEFF GREENIDGE

Head of diversity, Association of Colleges and the Education and Training Foundation

DAVID HUGHES

Chief executive, Association of Colleges



The DfE should follow up some recommendations in the Commission on Race

The report has many shortcomings but there are interesting suggestions in the section on education and training, write Jeff Greenidge and David Hughes

The recent report from the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities prompted strong backlash from many people and organisations.

The report is selective in its use of evidence, overlooking many important facts that illustrate how racism leads to gross inequalities and outcomes, and has little to say about further education.

Disappointingly, there is also no reflection in the report of the good work that colleges are doing now to address issues of race and exclusion. On their own, the recommendations are unlikely to address the underlying issues that cause unequal outcomes.

Perhaps even more worryingly, it seems in places to blame individuals and families without any recognition of the situation, culture and racism they experience and how that all leads to wider socio-economic disadvantages.

Despite these frustrations, the report's publication gives us an opportunity to engage in a challenging conversation about race in this country, and in particular in our sector.

We will focus on the education and training section, and how to address the issues, rather than getting embroiled in the report's

shortcomings elsewhere.

That section pays attention to schools, universities and apprenticeships, but doesn't look at the whole education and training system and the place of FE.

"The conversation and awareness generated around the report is no bad thing"

Different outcomes in terms of employment, wages and life chances are also overlooked. This is a missed opportunity, which we are determined won't deter us from addressing racism in FE.

However, the proposal for a 'highly-targeted apprenticeships campaign' is welcome – but does not go far enough. We want to see integrated college-level career and advice services supporting young people who currently face discrimination and cannot access

the full range of career pathways.

Like many others, Bolton College is doing fantastic work in this area. Staff are raising the aspirations of learners to go on to higher education, apprenticeships or set up their own businesses. Initiatives like this need to be recognised and built on at a national level.

Meanwhile, the report's call for government to work with a panel of academics and practitioners to "develop resources and evidence-based approaches of what does work to advance fairness in the workplace" is interesting. So, is the "support for families" review?

The Department for Education could follow this up by bringing together practitioners and stakeholders in FE to do the same. Practical resources and evidence-based approaches could be developed that advance inclusivity in the curriculum, workplace and community.

It could also give strength to the push for a richer history in the national curriculum. We should share initiatives like the one at West Suffolk College, where black

history is being taught throughout the year with a curriculum co-designed with the students.

There is also something to be said for the themes in the report's recommendations: Build Trust; Promote Fairness, Create Agency; Achieve Inclusivity. They are good ambitions, and it is always useful to 'test' your own plans against other reports.

AoC's Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity steering group has a set of actions aimed at increasing the numbers of black and minority ethnic leaders and governors, which are vital if we are to have a truly inclusive and trusted culture in FE.

Meanwhile, our work on improving data and research will help us better understand how different minority ethnic students achieve in FE.

We are also working with partners on an inclusive curriculum as well as training programmes for governing bodies, leaders and emerging ethnic minority leaders.

While the report itself may be a missed opportunity, the conversation and awareness generated around it is no bad thing.

Colleges, the AoC, Education and Training Foundation and the rest of the sector should seize this moment. We must turn that awareness and attention into change. We can do without more reports as long as we get more concerted action.



JEANNIE CHRISTINA

Lead learning and assessment support coordinator, South & City College Birmingham



Here are the top 3 lessons Covid taught us about learners with autism

Transition from school to college in particular needs to be improved, writes Jeannie Christina

Many of our learners have struggled during the pandemic, and for those with autism, this has been a particularly challenging time.

Since Covid struck, many of my autistic learners have experienced increased anxieties about social interaction, travelling and communicating.

Learners with autism focus on routines and rituals, and when that's disrupted, their sense of support is obliterated too. Lockdown has presented many difficulties that have impacted on their independence and confidence.

There has been an increase in mental health difficulties for many students, but for those with autism it has been that much more prevalent. Not having advance notice of the many changes that have come in has affected them, so the world has become like an alien environment.

"Simple" things like joining a class remotely, which most learners won't ever have done before, mean they have to adapt, and that can be very difficult. Some learners with autism chose to keep coming into college, because we have always stayed open for vulnerable students.

Then it's about being aware of how they might be feeling, and what we can do to alleviate some of

those anxieties. The way I describe it to colleagues is: imagine they are arriving in college with a big backpack on their back. In the backpack are lots of worries, like "will my class be running on time?", "will I be OK today?", "will I get the virus?".

I'm really proud of what our college has done to support our learners with autism. There's also a lot we can learn from this period.

Personal contact with our learners with autism and their families has become more important than ever. Our welfare and student services team ask what's going well and what the learner would find most helpful. We say "tell us what works for you", rather than expecting them to do things around us.

We've shown learners step-by-step how to join classes online, and helped them develop essential IT skills, so they are comfortable with this before it happens.

It's taught us that if there is to

be a fourth lockdown, or another pandemic in the future, super-close communication with learners and their families is absolutely key.

You need to know exactly when the communication is needed and how it's needed. That includes even before learners with additional needs come to college.

"You need to know exactly when the communication is needed and how it's needed"

We need a bigger focus on better communication from schools about the students' needs, their education, health and care (EHC) plan, and what support has worked for them previously.

Better communication around transition is the biggest lesson from lockdown. It's about having those

early conversations with the school or previous provider. Have they passed over everything you need to ensure their learner journey gets off to a successful start?

That's massively important for any student but especially for those with autism. They should be able to do trips to the campus so they know what to expect before they arrive.

Sometimes they arrive and we don't even know they've got an autism diagnosis until they tell us, because the school has not provided that information. That means it could be six to eight weeks before they get the right support.

We also need better funding. We know that college funding hasn't been increased for many years, which has a huge knock-on impact on our ability to provide what learners need. It must be increased.

There are more than 8,000 people in Birmingham with autism or an autism spectrum disorder. Across the UK, one in 100 people have an autism diagnosis. On our college campus alone, there are about 350 learners with an additional need, of whom about 115 have an autism diagnosis.

What we want is for them not to be faced with further difficulties, but for this part of them to be their superpower.

If we focus on transition, communication and better funding, they have a strong chance of believing they have the potential to succeed.



DORA MARTÍNEZ
CARBONELL

Sustainability
initiatives co-ordinator,
West Suffolk College



FE colleges need to seek advice from environmental sustainability experts

Teaching sustainability will increase student employment prospects – but we're still not doing it properly, writes Dora Martínez Carbonell

Sustainability has certainly become the buzzword of the 21st century. From reusable coffee cups claiming to make our coffee break ethical and green, to fashion brands making T-shirts from recycled plastics, to airlines offsetting flights so we can have “eco-holidays” – everyone is using it.

At the same time, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are gaining visibility and public attention. They highlight the interconnectedness of the critical issues affecting our planet.

We even have the 2030 SDGs official card game now, which explores how we can achieve the Sustainable Development Goals through different “real world” scenarios!

Today, companies and consumers recognise that sustainability is important. But are we doing enough in FE? Philippe Joubert, chief executive at Earth on Board, uses a very bold statement when advising his corporate clients: “Business as usual is dead”.

Millions of pounds spent in downstream corrective measures is not the answer. Instead, a different system is. And while it may be in the boardroom where big decisions are made, it is in the classroom where a society establishes and transmits its values. And yet sustainability is



insufficiently discussed in our FE centres.

How future leaders understand and envision the system determines the shape and form our societies take.

The Deloitte Global Millennial Survey 2020 found that young people (the next generation of customers, employees and CEOs) are highly concerned about environmental sustainability and social justice. They see beyond the immediate demands of the Covid pandemic.

They envision a better place, with fairer systems and a healthier environment. So we must give them the skills to bring that world into reality.

Sustainability is not a subject in and of itself. Rather, it is a discipline that feeds from many others and cuts across sectors, departments and industries.

The Guide for Sustainability in Further Education produced by the Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education makes clear why we need to embed it in FE. It is “to provide learners with the knowledge, skills and values that

are needed to mitigate the effects of climate change.

“Students with the skills and competences gained through education in sustainability will have increased employment prospects and greater potential for career progression.”

It adds that colleges have an important role to play in supporting local businesses and the wider community in their “journey towards a more sustainable way of living”.

“College leaders and tutors should get recognised training that’s backed by the science”

The need is real. The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment has found that only 13 per cent of companies are confident that they can compete in a sustainable economy. Over half report that it is difficult to recruit candidates with sufficient expertise.

So to achieve the prime minister’s

post-Covid-19 recovery plan for a ‘green industrial revolution’ and our legal commitment to zero greenhouse gas emissions in less than 30 years, significant reskilling and training is needed. For that, we must develop strategies that bring all stakeholders together.

In FE, we must bring sustainability expert voices onboard to advise course directors on how best to embed sustainability into their programmes.

This starts with ensuring our college leaders and course tutors understand the issues at play, and it’s important that they’re given recognised training that’s backed up by science and data.

This is why West Suffolk College teaches courses from the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. Only then can we share credible stories and case studies with our students.

Involving local businesses is also enormously helpful. There are some excellent advances being made in technology, processes and business strategy around sustainability that colleges can explore.

For the first time in history, we understand the drivers of the climate crisis and are beginning to suffer the effects of that crisis. But we also now have the knowledge, technology and means to start doing things differently.

It is a matter of transforming our systems, by resetting our mindsets.

As educators, we have the key in our hands to transform the wider system.



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The results of the mayoral elections in May will also offer pointers to devolved skills provision in the future with candidates' manifestos calling for 'youth guarantees' and more control over skills budgets.

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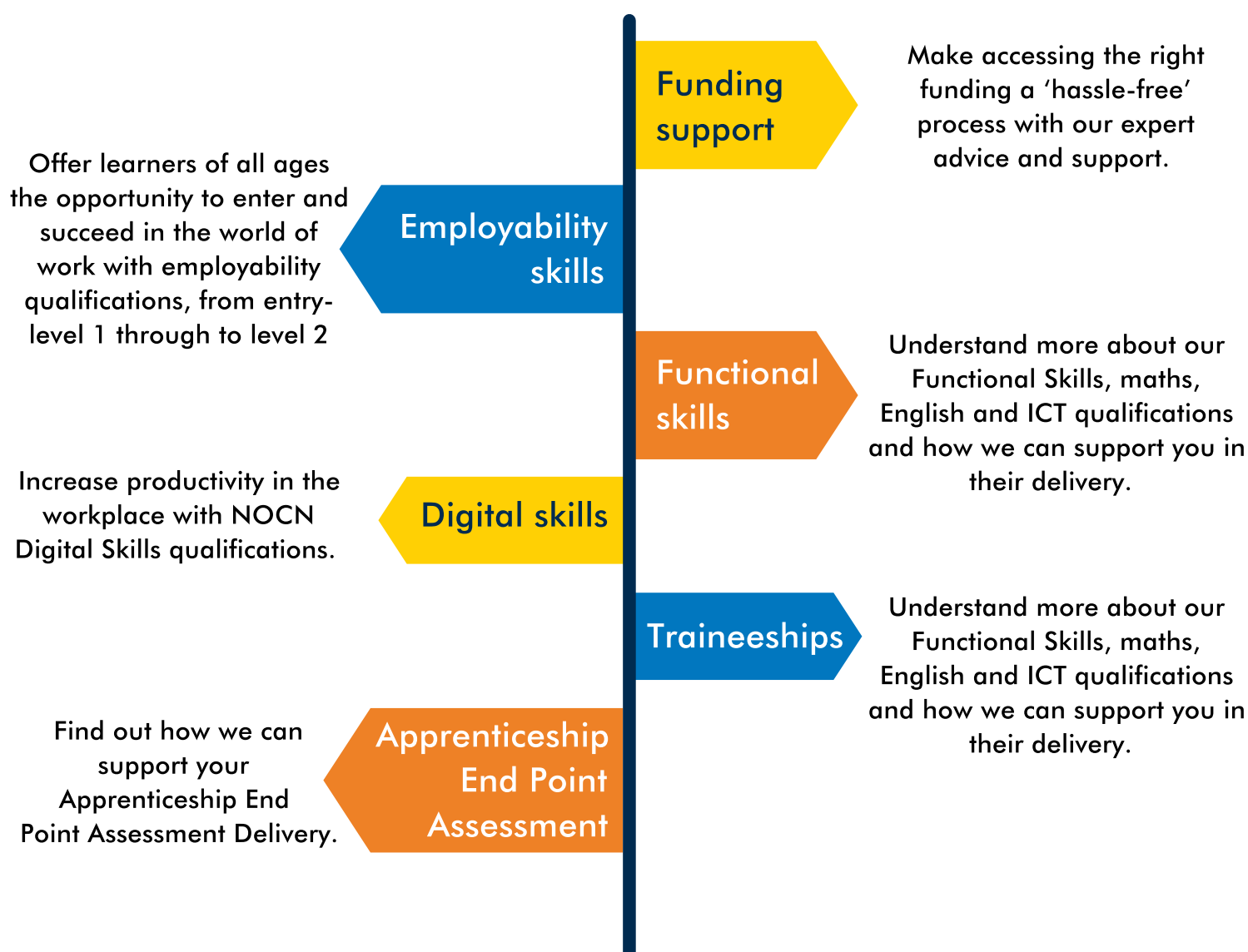
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Roadmap for Recovery





READER'S REPLY

Colleges take adult education clawback battle to Downing Street

Grant-funded providers should have pivoted and moved to more online delivery. Also, let's not forget, it's still only April! Still four months left of the academic year, the lockdown has been relaxed, just crack on with it and stop complaining.

Amy Ealing, website

Providers should have reacted to the changing delivery needs that the pandemic brought on and moved to a blended learning offer for those courses with which they were able to do so. Surely colleges can't be expecting the government to just allow them to keep the money.

Dean Ryan, website

As an independent training provider, we also have had huge clawbacks from 16-19 study programme funding, which is having a detrimental effect on provision for NEET.

Sue Fielding, Twitter

If it wasn't for the Treasury, I am sure that the ESFA would have reduced it by now! Where's the protection for private training providers? What about colleges who have over-performed?

FE Watch, website

Colleges for learners or employers? Governance adviser to government warns of legal tension

This is precisely the gaping hole in the sole of the Skills for Jobs white paper which fails to recognise the history and roots of further education. Employers and government came late to the party. It was the intrinsic human desire for self-development and community improvement that built our sector.

Bob Harrison, website

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?

CONTACT US NEWS@FEWEEK.CO.UK

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Colleges take adult education clawback battle to Downing Street

Personally, I think we need a slightly lower threshold (say 80-85 per cent) and a business case process to support those in exceptional circumstances. I don't think we should be rewarding those who haven't adapted their provision.

I also don't think it's helpful for ITPs and colleges to take an adversarial stance in this instance. Colleges tend to deliver the provision that is resource intensive, with lower profit margins. They should be protected, as their overheads are bigger, and arguably, what they deliver is more valuable. I don't think we should all be rushing to sub-contract the under-delivery, as all we will end up with is a huge volume of low-quality, e-learning, with poor learning outcomes.

Bob Smith

Race commission shines spotlight on apprenticeship 'disparities'

There also needs to be a targeted major campaign to boost apprenticeships, full stop.

Tom Bewick, Twitter

Ofsted to visit 'sample' of colleges where sexual abuse has been reported

I think this highlights two key concerns for me. Firstly, that inspectors just do not have enough time on inspection to look at safeguarding properly alongside everything else they have to do, especially in a big college or training provider, and nor do they have the necessary expertise to do so, through no fault of their own. The vast majority of inspectors are not safeguarding experts. As a result, the inspection of safeguarding has tended to become very formulaic on most inspections.

Richard Moore, website

Bulletin

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



Katie Easey

Director of education, community learning, The WEA

Start date June 2021

Previous job

Chief executive, Community Learning in Partnership

Interesting fact

She was a crew member on a 43-foot catamaran travelling from Cairns in Queensland to Christmas Island.



Chris Morgan

Director of education, employability and skills, The WEA

Start date April 2021

Previous job

Head of contracts, funding and partnerships, Nacro

Interesting fact

He spent part of a year in the town of Srebrenica in Bosnia as a humanitarian relief volunteer working with Bosnian and Serbian communities.

Movers & Shakers

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

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



Sam Windett

Deputy director, Learning and Work Institute

Start date July 2021

Previous job

Director of policy, Impetus

Interesting fact

She once worked on two General Elections within just six months of each other in Canada and the UK.



Cheryl Swales

Acting operations director, Association of Employment and Learning Providers

Start date April 2021

Previous job

National operations manager, Association of Employment and Learning Providers

Interesting fact

She once tandem skydived from 13,000ft

Got a story?



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