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Fury as colleges with 'historic' poor Ofsted grades are excluded from new £18m fund

FRASER WHIELDON
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From front

Exclusive

College principals are in uproar over being excluded from yet another government fund because they are stuck with a poor Ofsted grade, with no way to improve.

Last week, the Department for Education revealed grade three colleges would not be eligible for the new £18 million Growth Fund to expand provision of higher technical qualifications (HTQs) at levels 4 and 5.

Yet universities and other higher education institutions, either not in scope for an Ofsted inspection or that have not yet received one, are free to apply.

FE Week analysis shows that scores of colleges have waited longer than the normal maximum of 30 months for reinspection following a grade three report.

Full inspections have been called off since March 2020, owing to the pandemic, so providers cannot improve their grades until they resume in September.

NCG, one of the largest college groups in the country, has waited 37 months to be reinspected after being rated 'requires improvement' in June 2018.

Deputy chief executive Chris Payne told FE Week he finds the use of Ofsted grades in the criteria "increasingly frustrating".

He warned it will "unfairly exclude whole geographies, resulting in large numbers of students being unable to access and benefit from the development or capital support. This cannot be a fair way of implementing a levelling-up agenda across education."

Bradford College, which has waited 44 months since receiving a grade three in November 2017, highlighted how 'outstanding' providers had often gone much longer without inspection, yet they are eligible for all pots of funding.

Ofsted inspection



data shows some colleges' 'outstanding' grades go back as far as 2008.

Writing for FE Week, principal Chris Webb said Bradford College had been "stuck in limbo" for over a year now, and waiting until full inspections restart means "the college will have missed out on another year of opportunities.

"What chance does the college have of positioning itself as a college for the future, when it is held back by its past?"

Penny Wycherley, interim principal of Highbury College, which has waited 38 months, said it was "regrettable" the DfE does not recognise the difficulties this gives communities.

She said her college is experiencing "significant growth" in learner numbers, so would welcome funding to meet the needs of deprived areas with low achievement at levels 4 and 5.

Association of Colleges deputy chief executive Julian Gravatt called the investment "very welcome," but said it is "strange" the DfE is using old Ofsted ratings as an eligibility requirement when they are not the relevant body for HTQs such as Higher Nationals or foundation degrees.

Three universities that have been

handed a grade three by Ofsted for their apprenticeship provision – Sheffield Hallam, Staffordshire, and Suffolk – would also be unable to apply for the funding, despite the grade concerning a different area of provision to HTQs.

Staffordshire University said they are "currently seeking clarification on criteria for the Growth Fund".

University Vocational Awards Council chief executive Adrian Anderson said this "raises some issues as some institutions have limited amounts of apprenticeship provision, yet level 4 and level 5 might be particularly important to their locality".

Independent training providers will be eligible to apply, and chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers Jane Hickie said it is not "always easy for the authorities to strike the right balance between a wide geographical spread of providers and ensuring that all learners are receiving education that is judged to be at least 'good'".

But she wants the restriction kept under review if lockdown does not end next month.

The Department for Education failed to justify why it was including Ofsted grades in the criteria for the fund when approached by FE Week.

A spokesperson said that as providers need to spend the funding by March 2022, "we welcome applications from providers in a strong position to meet the aims and objectives of the fund and deliver value for the taxpayer".

An Ofsted spokesperson said it would not be appropriate to comment on how their grades are used.

Restricting applications for investment funding by using Ofsted grade is not new for the DfE: the first three waves of T Levels providers had to be 'good' or 'outstanding', as did colleges involved in the first two waves of the institutes of technology.

Guidance from January for the Further Education Capital Transformation Fund said providers applying for money to expand their campuses had to be 'outstanding'.



Chris Payne

DfE scraps 'ludicrous' bootcamp research and launches leak investigation

NICK LINFORD
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Exclusive

The Department for Education has been forced into an embarrassing U-turn by dropping "secret" plans to ban thousands of eligible jobless people from taking part in skills bootcamps.

The DfE has also launched an investigation into how the plans, laid out in a document sent to 18 providers and over 100 of their partners, were leaked to the media.

Announced by the prime minister Boris Johnson in September 2020, bootcamps are typically three-month courses at level 3 and above and form part of a number of new flagship adult education policies.

As reported by FE Week, the bootcamp providers were refusing to sign contracts after finding out the DfE would be paying research consultants to randomly reject half of all eligible applicants.

In a randomised control trial (RCT), rarely used in the education sector, the Institute for Employment Studies would take at least four weeks to "randomly select candidates for you from your qualifying candidates list and inform you of who is receiving [bootcamp] training and who is in the control group".

The DfE "delivery requirement" presentation, sent to winners of the £18 million bid, also spelt out that they must "not offer bootcamp training to any candidates in the control group for at least a year after they have been assigned to the control group, even if they ask/get referred again".

But with the "secret" RCT plan now revealed in FE Week, the DfE is now telling providers they will



scrap the RCT plan completely. And after repeating their plea for providers not to speak to the media, the civil servant revealed that an investigation had been launched into how FE Week was leaked the RCT plans.

Several providers approached FE Week with similar ethical concerns about the DfE researchers spending weeks to randomly separate the unemployed applicants into this "treatment group" and a "control group".

On hearing the DfE would now be scrapping the RCT plan, Gill Ditch, a retired teacher, tweeted: "Whoever thought up that ridiculous plan needs to be seriously questioned regarding their role."

But Aveek Bhattacharya, chief economist at the Social Market Foundation think tank, tweeted to say: "It's only unethical to carry out a trial denying treatment if you're super confident that an intervention is effective, and I'm not sure skills bootcamps warrant that level of confidence."

And Ben Gadsby, head of policy and research at Impetus, responded in an article for FE Week (see page 24), to say he is a fan of

randomised control trials and so this is "not good news".

He went on to say RCT findings could have proved the value of bootcamps and to "convince the government in the next spending review to invest more money in our colleges".

"Whoever thought up that ridiculous plan needs to be seriously questioned"

The education secretary, Gavin Williamson, was quizzed about the bootcamp RCT in an interview with our sister paper Schools Week at the Festival of Education this week.

When asked, several times, whether it was unethical, he dodged the question.

The DfE has also refused to comment on, or defend, the ethics of the research approach.



Gavin Williamson

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SKILLS BILL: THE SECOND READING

Lords seek numerous amendments

BILLY CAMDEN
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The government's Skills and Post-16 Education Bill received its second reading in the House of Lords on Tuesday, following publication of the first draft last month.

Department for Education minister Baroness Berridge opened the six-hour debate before 53 speakers had their say and put forward amendments they would like to see.

Here are the key changes discussed by the peers:

Give mayors a greater role in local skills improvement plans



Local skills improvement plans (LSIPs) designed by employer representative bodies (ERBs), which will decide which courses colleges and training providers should offer, are central to the Skills Bill reforms.

Baroness Wilcox, speaking for the opposition, raised concern about an "overt emphasis" in the Bill on an employer-led approach, warning that the "desire for employers to take the lead lack clear structures, transparency, and will render providers passive recipients of LSIPs".

She said mayoral combined authorities and local authorities "should be strategic partners" but their "wide-ranging knowledge and expertise on this agenda are currently missing" from the Bill.

Lord Watson of Invergowrie added that metro mayors have been "completely sidelined".

It comes after FE Week revealed in April that London mayor Sadiq Khan had slammed the government for cutting mayoral authorities out from leading new LSIP pilots.

Wilcox said Labour "will seek to amend the Bill to empower the metro mayors and combined authorities to co-produce the plans in recognition of the crucial role they have to play".

Education secretary's new powers must be watered down



A key piece of legislation in the Bill involves handing new powers to the education secretary to intervene when colleges "fail to meet local need". This can include forcing structural change, such as mergers and sacking

board members.

Wilcox said Labour is concerned that the secretary of state will, in the future, have the power to "select or sack ERBs, sign off on all LSIPs, dictate whether colleges fulfil these requirements, and to merge or replace colleges without recourse to local circumstances".

"The first port of call for approving local plans and remedying poor local performance should be local and not the centralisation of taking back control to Westminster," she insisted.

She added that the secretary of state's powers "must be narrowed" to apply "only in clearly defined, exceptional circumstances".

Remove IfATE's proposed powers



Another key proposal in the Bill is to give the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, a non-departmental public body directly accountable to ministers, the ultimate sign-off power for the approval and regulation of technical qualifications in future.

The Federation of Awarding Bodies has already warned that this would be a "retrograde step" from the independence of Ofqual and would introduce a conflict of interest.

Wilcox said Labour is "concerned that this handing back of day-to-day political control of technical qualification regulation would undermine the independent status of Ofqual and risks a cumbersome new dual-regulatory approval system".

"We will seek to amend the Bill to ensure that Ofqual remains the sole body," she added.

Lord Curry of Kirkharle also warned that the new roles envisaged for the institute would create a "two-tier and rather cumbersome regulatory approval system. The last thing we need is confusion, duplication and an additional load of bureaucracy".

Include maintenance funding in loan entitlement



The government plans to introduce a new loans system that allows people to study more flexibly and space out their studies across their lifetime.

Called the "lifelong loan entitlement", learners will be given four years' worth of loan funding

and be able to transfer credits between FE and HE providers.

Lord Storey warned that many adults will be "unable to take up these opportunities" because there is no support for living costs while they are taking a course in the entitlement.

"Thus these people will be prevented from transforming their life chances and being part of the skilled workforce that the country and the economy need."

His concern was echoed throughout the chamber by many others including Lord Bichard, Baroness Blackstone, Lord Bradley and Lord Watson of Invergowrie.

Reform Universal Credit rules

Storey called on the government to look at the entitlement rules for those people who are unemployed and on UC and who would benefit from attending college.

The length of time that people can continue receiving UC while undertaking work-focused study has been capped at eight weeks. The government announced recently that it would pilot an extension of this to 12 weeks for full-time study, or up to 16 weeks on a skills bootcamp in England.

Storey said this is a "barrier to those not in education, employment or training who could be upskilled or retrained".

The Lord Bishop of Leeds said this could be an "opportune time to reconsider the 16-hours-a-week work rule for those in receipt of Universal Credit, with proper safeguards in place to prevent abuse of the system. Great training is pointless if the people who need it are not incentivised to access it".

Make the Baker clause 'statutory'



Lord Baker told the debate he will be seeking to amend the Bill to put the Baker clause on a "statutory footing" – meaning it would become a legal duty rather than an obligation that is "dependent upon ministerial advice", as it currently is.

Baker hopes this will strengthen the clause and could force schools into court if they do not comply in the future (see page 10 for full story).

SKILLS BILL: THE SECOND READING

Skills Bill passage: how the parliamentary process works

BILLY CAMDEN
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There are various steps that the Skills Bill now has to take as it moves through parliament and before it becomes law. Here's a guide to the passage of a Bill.

Bill started in the House of Lords

First reading (Lords)

This is the first stage of a Bill's passage through the House of Lords and takes place without debate. It involves the relevant minister, in this case Baroness Berridge,

reading out the long title.

Second reading

Peers debate the main purpose of a Bill and raise any concerns or specific areas where they think amendments are needed.

Committee stage

This involves detailed line-by-line examination of the clauses of the Bill. Every clause has to be agreed to and votes on any amendments can take place. This stage generally lasts for up to eight days but can go on for longer.

Report stage

All members of the Lords are given a

further opportunity to examine and vote on amendments to the Bill. This can be spread over several days.

Third reading

This is the chance for members to "tidy up" the Bill, "concentrating on making sure the eventual law is effective and workable – without loopholes," according to parliament.uk.

Amendments can still be made at third reading in the House of Lords, provided the issue has not been fully considered and voted on during either committee or report stage.



This process is then repeated in the House of Commons



Final stages

Consideration of amendments

When the Bill has passed through third reading in both Houses it is returned to the first House where it started for any amendments made by the second House to be considered.

If the Commons makes amendments to the Bill, the Lords must consider them and either

agree or disagree to the amendments or make alternative proposals.

If the Lords disagrees, or makes alternative proposals, then the Bill is sent back to the Commons.

Royal assent

Once both Houses agree on the final Bill, it is ready to receive royal assent – when the Queen formally agrees to make the Bill into an Act of Parliament. There is no set

time period between the conclusion of consideration of amendments and royal assent.

When royal assent has been given, an announcement is made in both Houses.

The legislation within the Bill may then come into effect immediately, after a set period or only after a commencement order by a government minister.

SKILLS BILL: THE SECOND READING

Lords line up to challenge new law on provider insurance

BILLY CAMDEN

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Plans to force independent training providers to take out insurance to cover against possible cessation of training are set to be challenged in the House of Lords.

The Skills Bill proposes to introduce a set of conditions required of independent training providers to be on a new government list of approved providers.

Among the conditions is "insurance arrangements made and maintained by provider to cover associated exit costs", as well as a registration fee.

During Tuesday's second reading of the Skills Bill, Lord Aberdare warned that the "onerous" conditions would "constrain" the training provider market.

After telling his peers that he used to run a small training provider himself, Aberdare said that as a small business focused on service delivery, "we would have struggled to meet the sorts of conditions suggested in the Bill – for example, for insurance cover against possible cessation of training".

He described the plans as a "sledgehammer" approach that "risks penalising all ITPs for the failings of a few".

Baroness Wolf, who is a skills adviser to the prime minister, defended the new list and conditions earlier in the hearing. She said that while the independent training provider sector contains "many truly excellent, innovative and effective organisations", this part of the system and its "overall reputation" have been "bedevilled by regular failures and scandals".

"What we now have proposed is a single unified system of protection for learners which I hope other noble Lords will join me in welcoming," she added.

An impact assessment report for the Skills Bill explains that the new list of ITPs and its conditions are required because there are "delays in the current system" of "finding a new



Lord Aberdare

provider" for learners when another goes bust.

The delays come about because providers often have to take on the learners and receive no additional funding. This "makes it difficult to place some affected learners with alternative providers and this brings with it the risk that the learner may disengage and then fail to complete their learning", according to the DfE.

The impact assessment goes on to state that provider failings also "incur costs to government, for example, administrative costs in resourcing learner transfers or writing off advanced learner loans".

FE Week has reported on various cases of loans providers going bust in recent years, leaving learners in the lurch and in some cases, left with high levels of debt and no opportunity to complete their course.

Following an FE Week campaign, the DfE changed the law in 2019 to give the education secretary the power to clear student debt in those cases.

To combat the cost and delay issue, the DfE wants providers to take out a new type of insurance to cover the costs of transfer of learners to a new provider.

The report is light on detail but admits this

could incur significant additional costs on the sector. A consultation is expected to flesh out the details before the law is finalised.

But the DfE says "professional indemnity insurance" is anticipated to be required, which is typically set up to cover: breach of duty, civil liability, breach of contractual liability that is not caused by negligence, contractual liability, and legal costs.

Insurance expert Wayne Cowley, director of Trainsure, told FE Week this is "unlikely to be cheap in the present climate. If the risk is an ITP going bust, then the DfE is looking more for a creditors insurance, or even claiming against the ITPs management liability policy, depending on circumstances.

"It may be more like a clawback of the funds rather than an insurance risk, or if they have gone bust, it is like being a creditor wanting their money back."

He said that from a professional indemnity insurance point of view, if the risk could be understood and written, it is likely there will need to be a number of policy "triggers" to satisfy the cover.

The DfE would have to make a claim and "these things can take considerable time to investigate, qualify and quantify".

He added that professional indemnity insurance cost depends on the size of the turnover, but somebody with a £2 million contract could be looking at £3,000-plus annually.

Aside from insurance, the new list of ITPs will require a registration fee, "provisions of student exit plans", and access to learner and financial records. Providers will need to be on the list in order to gain funding.

Lord Bichard told Tuesday's debate that the feeling among providers in his area in Gloucestershire is that the plans "could make their existence more perilous".

"During the passage of the Bill, we need to ensure that it is possible for independent training providers to continue to provide their best and to strengthen in the future," he added.

Baker's back: Could schools be sued for limiting careers advice?

FRASER WHIELDON
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The architect of the Baker clause is attempting to use the Skills Bill to strengthen the law, which could lead to schools facing court action.

Former education secretary Kenneth Baker hopes to repeat a move he pulled in 2017, when he got the government to accept the clause as an amendment to the Technical and Further Education Act.

He announced to the House of Lords on Tuesday he is seeking to amend the government's Skills and Post-16 Education Bill to put the clause on a statutory footing.

The clause mandates schools and colleges to give training providers the opportunity to talk to students of certain ages about technical qualifications and apprenticeships.

Speaking to FE Week, Baker explained the clause currently places "an intention" for schools to offer those opportunities, which can be enforced through ministerial guidance to headteachers. Putting it on a statutory footing would make compliance a "legal duty" on schools.

If they fail to do so, providers or parents could take them to court, said Baker. He is currently having the amendment drafted before it is submitted and voted on at the committee stage of the Bill's passage through the House of Lords, which is due to start next month.

Baker introduced the clause largely to make schools promote university technical colleges, a programme of which he was architect and which he has overseen as chair of the Baker Dearing Trust, which licenses the UTC name.

But he complained the act has been "largely disregarded" by schools up until now. He said

schools have either ignored it, or have invited providers in, only to cancel later, or have arranged the visits for last thing on a Friday afternoon.

"They are desperate not to have to implement it," he said, adding the government has "done nothing" to improve the situation, even though Baker believes: "This is the most effective way of getting good careers guidance."

The Skills for Jobs white paper, published by the Department for Education in January to lay the groundwork for the new bill, set out a new plan to enforce the clause.

This includes a new minimum requirement about who is given access to certain pupils, "tougher formal action" on non-compliance, and making government careers support funding for school conditional on compliance with the clause.

The Department for Education has promised a consultation on the reforms, which is expected to run this summer.

But Baker is unimpressed with the promised changes: "So what? The schools will disregard it still."

Ministers have made minimal efforts to enforce the clause, most recently when then-academies minister Lord Agnew wrote to headteachers to remind them of the obligation to promote technical education in

February 2020.

The FE and skills sector has been increasingly discussing how the clause ought to be enforced, in the face of mounting evidence it is being ignored.

Research by UCAS found that one-third of students are not told about apprenticeships, and the admissions service has now pledged to become a "digital Baker clause", providing information and advice to young people on their opportunities.

Oli de Botton, chief executive of the government's own careers quango, The Careers and Enterprise Company, told the AELP conference last week it was "true historically that there hasn't been enough access for ITPs or enough information about apprenticeships and technical routes for young people".

This week, the Commons education select committee grilled Ofsted chief inspector Amanda Spielman on whether non-compliance with the clause ought to be a limiting factor on a school's inspection grade.

Spielman said it was "unlikely" a provider would be rated 'outstanding' if they were found to be non-compliant, contradicting the watchdog's deputy director for FE Paul Joyce, who said last week it should not be a "determining factor" in a grade.

Baker believes the watchdog should report on career guidance at providers, and "if the school is not actually implementing the clause, and if they're likely to be 'outstanding', they shouldn't be given 'outstanding'.

"All Ofsted has to ask the school is 'what meeting have you arranged for the outside providers, have you arranged one, what date did you do it?' That's what they've got to ask. And if the school hasn't done it, they shouldn't be given 'outstanding'."



Lord Baker

Ofsted raps performing arts provider for body shaming students

BILLY CAMDEN
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A theatre and dance company has been slammed by Ofsted for body shaming its students.

Learners at the Bodywork Company, based in Cambridge, told inspectors of choosing not to eat after classes for fear they will gain weight following “inappropriate” comments made by some staff in front of their peers.

Students told the watchdog that “looking beautiful” was “more valued by these staff than students’ talents”.

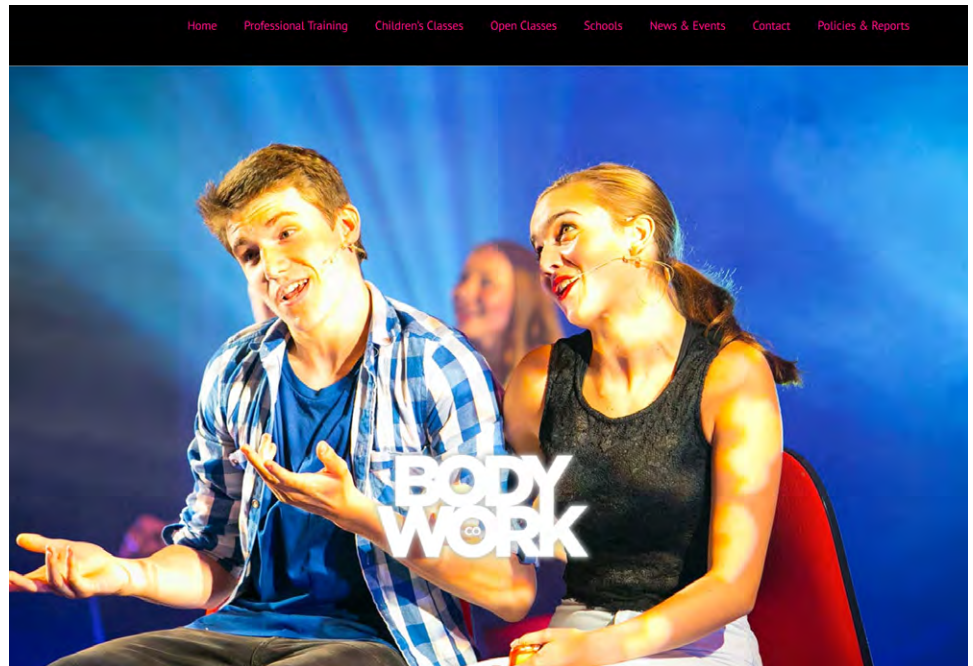
Ofsted’s report, published on Thursday, goes on to claim there are incidents of some staff discouraging students from going to auditions for roles when they may not have “the desired physique”.

The provider told FE Week the issues are “historic” and they have since fired the staff in question.

“We are now doing the very best we can to ensure all of our students feel good about themselves”

This was the second time the inspectorate has visited the Bodywork Company in the past seven months following safeguarding concerns. Both reports found ‘insufficient’ safeguarding arrangements. The provider had 78 learners on its books at the time of Ofsted’s visit.

Bodywork Company founder Theresa Kerr said she has been left “devastated” by the



report.

“Unfortunately, this is historical,” she told FE Week. “I had to let a teacher go just before lockdown. She had been with us since 2019 and it was pretty apparent she was making some very negative remarks to the students. We also had a singing teacher who we let go. Both went at the beginning of 2020, and it stopped.

“We have had multiple staff training days because of this. Our present faculty are brilliant and completely understand how to treat young people.”

Kerr said the students have carried the inappropriate comments with them and she is “desperately sorry about that. We are now doing the very best we can to ensure all of our students feel good about themselves, never ever mentioning the weight.”

Aside from body shaming, Ofsted reported that governors at the provider had resigned earlier this year because of the “lack of safe recruitment practices”.

Inspectors said that leaders’ ongoing

scrutiny of safeguarding arrangements, “although strengthened, is not yet comprehensive”. Their oversight of chaperoning arrangements for visiting and guest tutors, for example, “remains insufficient”.

However, safer recruitment practices “are now established, and employment references followed up appropriately”.

Kerr admitted that her provider had previously failed to carry out the necessary DBS checks when hiring staff, but that this had now been addressed.

Ofsted praised Bodywork Company’s tutors who now “systematically teach students how to stay safe in the performing arts world”. For example, students know how to protect their online identity and manage their social media presence appropriately.

Students demonstrate a “good understanding of safe working practices” and have an “effective understanding of the protected characteristics of others”.

No 10 looks for adviser to push education policy

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
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Downing St is seeking a “deputy director for education, jobs and skills” to join its new delivery unit set up to drive policy implementation.

But former government advisers this week said the No 10 role would only make a difference if the government had a “clear vision”, and that its impact on policymaking and delivery would depend on having “the ear” of the prime minister.

According to a job advert, the new £71,000 to £117,800-a-year role will be based in the No 10 Delivery Unit, a new team within the Cabinet Office that “should grow to around 40 staff”.

The vacancy is likely to exacerbate concerns that education policy is increasingly run not from the Department for Education, but from Boris Johnson’s office.

The unit, set up on the recommendations of former Tony Blair adviser Sir Michael Barber, will “support capacity building in government departments”.

The deputy director, who will be appointed on a two-year contract, will lead an education, jobs and skills team and “focus departments and delivery partners on the successful delivery of critical outcomes in that area”.

The new role will involve using the prime minister’s “backing” to “intervene effectively where delivery is slowing to get projects back on track”.

But Jonathan Simons, who did a similar job during Gordon Brown’s premiership, warned that “no central unit, however lavishly staffed, can make a difference unless



the government has a clear vision of what it wants to track delivery against - and I’m not sure we always have that”.

It was “not a surprise” that the new unit wanted a team covering these issues, and it was “good to see an explicit link between jobs and skills and education”.

“I’d expect the attention to be more on FE and skills and HE than schools issues.”

Sam Freedman, who worked on policy during Michael Gove’s time at the Department for Education, said role’s impact would depend “entirely on who they hire. Who their boss is. Whether they have the PM’s ear and whether they have any relationships in the DfE”.

“Everything in Westminster in relational. Titles don’t mean much.”

The advert says the unit is looking for someone with expertise “relating to the education, jobs and skills mission”, for example, in “education or skills policy or education bodies”. Applications close on June 27.

The new unit, which will be run by Dr Emily Lawson, England’s lead on vaccine deployment, will be similar to Barber’s group

during the Blair years.

Johnson warned in a speech last year of a need to fix problems “brutally illuminated” by Covid, including the “parts of government that seemed to respond so sluggishly so that sometimes it seemed like that recurring bad dream when you are telling your feet to run and your feet won’t move”.

According to *Civil Service World*, Johnson’s official spokesperson said earlier this year that the unit would not affect policymaking at department level. It was “about making sure that the prime minister’s priorities are being delivered”.

But *i News* reported that the prime minister risked accusations of trying to “override” the civil service.

Kate Green, the shadow education secretary, pointed to the recent resignation of Sir Kevan Collins, the education recovery commissioner, and said creating new government jobs “does nothing to create better outcomes for children or better public services”.

Downing Street was approached for comment.

News

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High-profile college boss steps down after 18 years

BILLY CAMDEN
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Exclusive

The president of the Association of Colleges is retiring as chief executive of one of England's largest college groups at the end of the year.

Sally Dicketts has informed the Activate Learning board that she will be stepping down after 18 years at the helm.

She told FE Week that she will be staying on as president of the AoC, a role she has held

since August 2020, for another year.

Dicketts has worked in further education for more than 35 years and was awarded a CBE in the Queen's Honours List in July 2013.

She is also a board member for the Education and Training Foundation, Pearson, and deputy chair of the LEP skills board.

Dicketts said she is retiring as she will turn 66 in July.

She has "no intention" of working as an interim college boss once she retires, but plans to do "something" part-time.

She has been chief executive of Activate



Learning since 2003, bringing together in one group seven FE colleges.

The group is currently rated 'good' by Ofsted.

Principals launch 'Good for ME, Good for FE' volunteering campaign

FRASER WHIELDON
FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK

A trio of leading college bosses have today launched an initiative to raise £1 million in "social value" through staff volunteering.

The principals of London South East Colleges (LSEC), Loughborough College and East Coast College – Sam Parrett, Jo Maher, and Stuart Rimmer – want the "Good for ME Good for FE" campaign to fill foodbanks and build partnerships with charities and companies.

Parrett said: "We want to encourage and mobilise this incredible community spirit across our college group and indeed the wider sector."

Over the next few weeks, the initiative will be rolled out across the three colleges with others being invited to sign up.

The impact of the campaign will be measured through a "social value calculator" developed by LSEC. It will calculate how many volunteering hours have been contributed in monetary terms to social goals such as increasing access to employment and

skills, helping the environment and growing businesses.

A target of £1 million has been set. It builds on the work committed to FE Foodbank Friday last year, when 30 colleges, led by LSEC, raised over £47,000 and collected 20,000 food items.

Rimmer, who is also a wellbeing coach, said research had shown volunteering benefits staff and students through "reduction in stress, preventing feelings of isolation, increasing confidence and providing a deeper sense of purpose and meaning through service".



All of which he said was "important at a time when individual and community wellbeing is of utmost priority. Lockdown has shown us that people are designed to be in communities."

The new initiative will be split into three strands: one, building on the work of FE Foodbank Friday with colleges continuing to collect donations.

A second will involve encouraging volunteering activity inside and outside the college community, while the third will be to develop corporate and charitable partnerships.

Maher said Covid-19 "demonstrated the collective power of further education in going the extra mile to help support communities, and the FE Foodbank Friday campaign was a shining example of this.

"By creating a sustainable initiative centred around volunteering, that achieves more holistic outcomes, we are confident that we can hit the £1 million target and support positive action towards health and wellbeing."

Any colleges interested in joining the initiative should contact Andrew.cox@lsec.ac.uk

FE teacher-training pilot applications now open for four-week window

FRASER WHIELDON
FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Applications for a £9.5 million government pilot to bolster teacher training in the further education sector have opened today.

The Department for Education has announced a four-week bidding window for the FE Professional Development Grants pilots, which will run in 2021/22.

They will focus on strengthening staff's skills and confidence in using technology to deliver education, as well as subject-specific development to improve curriculum design and teaching, learning and assessment.

There will also be "tailored" support for the sector's new and inexperienced teachers to help career progression and aid retention.

Apprenticeships and skills minister Gillian Keegan says the pilots "will make sure the sector can develop and grow and unlock even more potential".

“This fund will enable those collaborating to provide high-quality CPD in a variety of areas and specialisms”

Further education colleges and training providers have been invited to "partner up" and submit bids for funding to develop professional development approaches that are evidence-based, allow for peer-to-peer support, and have outcomes sustainable over a long period of time.

Association of Colleges deputy chief



executive Kirsti Lord said the core focus on technology, subject-specific development and the retention of new teachers is "timely" owing to the pandemic and the shift to online training.

"Colleges are well used to working together on quality improvement and CPD; this fund will enable those collaborating to provide high-quality CPD in a variety of areas and specialisms which it would be challenging to deliver individually."

Association of Employment and Learning Providers' Jane Hickie said she was "confident that a collaborative approach for bids will bring forward some really innovative ideas that will have a positive impact".

The money forms part of the government's promise in January's Skills for Jobs white paper to take spending on the sector workforce to £65 million in 2021/22.

The paper said the government "will encourage more organisations with relevant expertise to provide high-quality and

evidence-based training and development for teaching staff in the sector".

This builds on the work of the WorldSkills Centre of Excellence, run in partnership with awarding organisation NCFE, which sent the trainers of the UK's "Skills Olympics" competitors to share best practice with college and ITP teachers.

In February, the Department for Education launched a tender worth £3 million to expand the Taking Teaching Further programme and bring as many as 4,000 people into the sector.

A new "Teach in Further Education" digital information platform and a national recruitment campaign were also promised in the white paper.

Providers have until Friday, July 16 to apply for the pilots, and providers will be told the outcome of their application after September 1.

The DfE has said guidance, including an application form, will be released today.



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 Location: Hull | Reference: HUL/21/0315

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For an informal discussion please contact:
rachel.david@hullcc.gov.uk or call 01482 614367

To find out more and to apply visit:
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Closing date: midnight on 28 June 2021



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Closing date: Thursday 8th July, 12 noon

Interview date: Thursday 15th July

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Feature

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Focus: Governance



‘It’s important for leaders to move through at a reasonable rate’

JESS STAUFENBERG
@STAUFENBERGJ

College leadership failings continue to prove costly, and the education secretary is now seeking greater powers to take more direct action through the Skills Bill. But could one solution be to limit the time bosses are at the helm? FE Week takes a look...

Most experts in the sector say the old days of a “job for life” for principals are long gone. Now, the new measures put forward in the Skills for Jobs white paper might cause their tenure to be cut shorter – or at least make them work even harder for it. Will boards set CEOs tighter KPIs from local skills plans? Scrutinise more closely how they meet employer-led targets?

It’s not just executive roles the DfE has been thinking about. Governing boards are also in the department’s line of sight, with the white paper saying ministers will take a “clearer position on what good governance” looks like and will propose “specific requirements”.

The message is clear: the DfE is getting more involved in leadership performance, and that involvement is here to stay.

In such a challenging environment, the need for strong chief executives is perhaps greater than ever, and effective chairs of boards are equally crucial. But does length of tenure matter?

A few years ago, the corporate world was wringing its hands over a PwC study on the staying power of bosses. UK chief executives were spending only 4.8 years in the job, below the five-year global average. More

recently, FTSE 100 bosses had at least clawed it back to five years (which is better than football managers).

But while burnout of chief executives is often discussed in FE, there’s another side to the same question: what about those who choose to stay for a long time?

FE Week analysed the top 20 biggest colleges to find out how long their chief executives or principals had been in post, according to their LinkedIn profiles or college websites. The answer? Six and a half years on average. It’s a reassuringly longer stay than FTSE 100 bosses, but not so long that anyone can accuse FE of cosy “jobs for life”.

But there is real variation in that list.

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Focus: Governance

CONTINUED

The longest period is 22 years (Ian Pryce at Bedford College), followed by 20 years and 6 months (Paul Phillips at Weston College) and 18 years (Sally Dicketts at Activate Learning).

Then there are those in the middling ground, such as Shelagh Legrave, set to become the next FE Commissioner, after leading Chichester College for 11 years; and Corrienne Peasgood, who has led City College Norwich for eight years and 10 months.

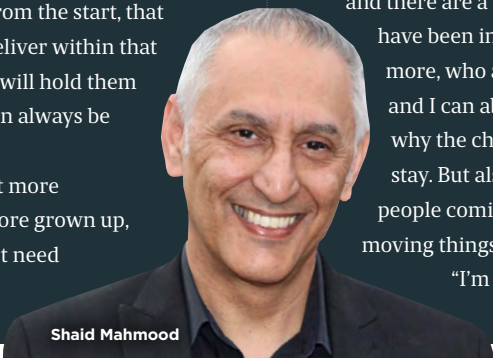
“My personal view is to go with the American model of five-year terms”

Ought FE colleges to consider setting fixed terms for the CEO, after which point their performance is reviewed? Even if a CEO is doing well, should there come a cut-off point where they take their expertise elsewhere?

Tom Bewick, chief executive of the Federation of Awarding Bodies, thinks so. In the US, he says, some community college leaders are on five-year fixed terms. “They’re pretty hard-nosed contracts, with key performance indicators around finances, student enrolment, student experience, and if you’re not meeting those targets, it’s time to move on.

“My personal view is to go with the American model, in that colleges should be able to put out a five-year fixed term with a review. What that does is set in place the expectation clearly from the start, that the CEO is there to deliver within that time, by a board that will hold them to account. Then it can always be extended.

“We need to be a bit more forgiving and a bit more grown up, that people might just need to move on from a



Shaïd Mahmood



senior post,” he adds.

The recommendation echoes the “Civil Service Reform plan” published in 2013 which announced that permanent secretaries of government departments would now be on five-year fixed contracts. The intention was to tackle the fact permanent secretaries were not staying long enough, rather than staying too long.

But others in the sector are sympathetic to the idea of a preferred length of stay for chief executives.

Shaïd Mahmood, chair of Luminate Education Group, and also chair of the Association of Colleges, explains it is “important for people to move through at a reasonable rate. There are always exceptions,

and there are a number of CEOs who have been in post for ten years or more, who are really good CEOs, and I can absolutely understand why the chair wants them to stay. But also, I’m a big believer in people coming in, getting stuck in, moving things on, and moving on.

“I’m pretty good at moving

people on, and I mean that in a really positive way. It’s about succession planning with them for what they want to do next. That brings in more blood, and I think we should be doing that with our CEOs.”

Mahmood adds: “I think about five to seven years is about right for principals, and four is too short.”

Like Mahmood, Sue Pember, policy director at HOLEX, thinks there is a wise length of time for a CEO to be in post, but it depends on circumstances. “You probably want three years, three years to do it right, and three years to innovate. However, there are successful principals who have been there for 25 years.”

But fixed-term contracts are not advisable, she says. Colleges would have to offer more benefits and so there would be a “salary drift upwards”, says Pember. “It allows people to play the system. I don’t think you’d get loyalty.”

What the sector is largely agreed on, however, is the need for the chair to regularly

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Focus: Governance

CONTINUED

move on – particularly to ensure that poor-performing CEOs don't get to stick around.

FE Week was able to find information on chairs at 17 of the 20 biggest colleges, again according to LinkedIn and college websites. On average, they have been in the role for 4.5 years. It doesn't sound excessive.

But according to codes of good governance, that question depends on how long chairs have been sat on the board as a member before they became chair.

The UK Corporate Governance Code clearly states that "circumstances that are likely to impair, or could appear to impair, a non-executive director's independence include whether a director [...] has served on the board for more than nine years".

The Charity Governance Code says the same: "If a trustee has served for more than nine years, their reappointment is subject to a particularly rigorous review" that must "take account of the need for progressive refreshing of the board".

They echo the findings of a 2017 research paper called Do Directors Have a Use-by Date? that looked at 3,000 firms over 18 years. "Our evidence suggests that board tenure is positively related to forward-looking measures of market value, with the relationship reversing after about nine years on average."

However, the Association of College's governance code – which is being updated – is not quite as clear. It says governors should not serve more than two terms, or a maximum of eight years, "except where subsequently undertaking a new and more senior role, for example, as chair".

It adds only: "There are variations in the length of term for which chairs are

appointed."

Kirsti Lord, deputy chief executive at the Association of Colleges, acknowledges the AoC would like the wording to be more precise. "Our guidance is not as prescriptive as we think it could be in terms of best practice." The reason for this, she says, is because there are examples of successful colleges where the chair has been in position for longer.

"There's the advantage of new blood, and the disadvantage of going stale"

"But what we see sometimes is that some people think if you are a board member, and you progress to be chair, you can start your time all over again. That isn't the case. The entire total of your tenure on the board, including as chair, should still be nine years."

Peter Lauener, former ESFA boss who has been chair of NCG for three years, is in agreement. "I strongly support the guideline of nine years on the board," he says. "There's the advantage of new blood, and the disadvantage of going stale. It's a good figure, which should not be exceeded."

FE Week analysis shows a few chairs in the biggest colleges are coming up to the recommended nine-year mark. Andrew Barnes, chair of City College Norwich, Charles Buchanan, chair of EKC Group, Nick Davies, chair of HCUC Group, and Rob Lawson, chair of Sunderland College,

have all been on the board for eight years or more.

Meanwhile Clive Henderson, chair at South & City College Birmingham, has been on the board nine years, and James Pinchbeck, chair at Lincoln

College Group, has been on the board for nine years and 10 months.

The longest-serving governor is Derek Randall, chair of Bridgwater & Taunton College, who according to the college's website has held governing roles there for 20 years. College CEO Andy Berry says Randall has "been at the heart of the transformational change" at the college during his tenure, including growing it to one of the biggest and most successful.

Paul Phillips, the long-standing chief executive at Weston College, says "you want the chair changing probably every eight years or less," adding "that's more important, I think, than whether they've been governors for a while".

People moving on also aids diversity, points out Fiona Chalk, national head of governance at the Education and Training Foundation. Just three of the 20 current chairs are women, FE Week can reveal. "Long-term tenure is not good for the organisation, because you tend to get complacency and group-think," says Chalk.

The government's proposals in the white paper might be about to seriously shake that up.

For a start, the DfE wants to "set new requirements for annual board self-assessment and regular external governance reviews". The ETF and AoC have already run a pilot in 30 colleges to trial the external reviews, which are intended to help improve college governing boards, and the findings will be revealed soon.

Whether chairs should be paid is also under review, and a governance "framework of skills and competencies" is being developed too.

There's not much appetite for fixed-terms for CEOs, but there is a sense of them having an ideal average tenure.

To ensure only the very best CEOs get to stay longer, the sector seems agreed it's vitally important chairs of governors do not overstay their welcome.



Kirsti Lord



Paul Phillips

BEN GADSBY

Head of policy and research, Impetus



The U-turn on randomised control trials is bad news for FE

Randomised control trials are the answer to FE's biggest questions, writes Ben Gadsby

I have a confession: My name is Ben and I am a fan of randomised control trials (RCTs).

Take two similar groups of people, give one a skills bootcamp, one not-a-skills-bootcamp, and then compare the outcomes. It's hardly life or death – unlike if you replace “skills bootcamp” with “vaccine” in that sentence...

Last week's paper seemed to somewhat disagree, and now the government has U-turned. But this is not good news – FE Week readers should be fans of RCTs too.

Do skills bootcamps work? This is a simple but vital question. No one knows. Skills bootcamps might be the sector's finest invention – or a bigger waste of time than trainspotting. An RCT is the most effective way to answer the question.

If you're curious about why an RCT is the best way to answer “does it work” questions, I recommend the blogs of the late American psychologist Robert Slavin. Suffice to say if you really want to know if something works then randomness is a necessary feature, not a bug – as is making sure your comparison group doesn't end up getting the benefits (or otherwise) of what you're testing.

But much more important than research methodology is this: if we want the FE sector to be the

best that it can be, we need more research, not less. It's good for the sector and it's good for the people it serves.

It's good for the sector because it's how we address the longstanding underfunding in comparison to schools. We need to convince the government in the next spending review to invest more money in our colleges.

But the only way to do that is with evidence that the money will lead to better outcomes – better skills, better pay, less worklessness, etc. The Treasury will be willing to invest in things that change lives, not things that don't change lives.

And these outcomes are the outcomes we all want for students too. How much money is currently wasted on projects and schemes that have zero impact on anything that matters? Probably a billion.

Not only do we not know that it's not having an impact (because no one is investigating), but even if we did, we don't know what we should do instead (because no one is investigating).

A comparison with schools is



illuminating. Our sister charity, the Education Endowment Foundation, has conducted numerous RCTs and found that most of the initiatives they trial don't have an impact on attainment. These are things schools should probably think more carefully about spending money on.

“If we want the FE sector to be the best that it can be, we need more research, not less”

But the initiatives that do have an impact on attainment tend to attract money – big money. The government is currently retendering for a school breakfast programme, because Magic Breakfast proved in an RCT that it works.

The government is throwing money at tutoring for millions of pupils – because the Tutor Trust proved in an RCT that it works. Impetus has funded and supported both charities in recent years.

Ironically, that RCT for the Tutor Trust is actually the reason colleges have access to the 16-to-19 tuition fund at all. But not because an FE tutoring model got an RCT. The sector is fortunate to have providers building on the schools evidence base, such

as Get Further, which offers an impressive tutoring programme built on similar principles to the Tutor Trust model but tailored to the needs of FE learners.

No, it is concerning that colleges didn't get a chunk of money because they made an evidence-based case to fund provision. Instead, they only got the money because the sector would have otherwise complained. That shouldn't be the basis on which FE gets money. It's a patronising pat on the head: run along and stop moaning.

Incidentally, that's the same instinct that has probably led to the U-turn. I wish the government were now making the case for RCTs in FE but instead you can almost hear the sigh from the DfE: fine, we won't do it. Now run along and stop moaning.

Finally, ethical concerns about some people being denied the support they potentially need are understandable. But here's the thing - we don't know if bootcamps actually help anyone. It's perfectly possible that they don't. No one ever worries about the ethical considerations of wasting people's time on a pointless experience.

The main point is FE is failing to get the investment it needs because we don't have proven programmes to make the case.

As a sector, we should aspire to prove our worth, and demand the investment that is merited.

The key word in that sentence is prove. We need evidence.

Opinion

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PROFESSOR
CHRIS HIGGINS
AND KEITH
SHARPE

Leaders, Secular
Education Forum,
National Secular Society



The Church of England
offensive in FE colleges
must be resisted

The Church's proposals have little to do with education and more to do with reversing its declining numbers among young people, write Chris Higgins and Keith Sharpe

The Church of England is on a missionary offensive in our FE colleges. This is the thrust of a recent report, Vocation, Transformation and Hope: a vision for the Church of England's engagement with further education, fronted by the bishop of Winchester, Tim Dakin.

How is it that the "bishop for higher and further education" can produce a report that has so little to say about the realities of education and so much to say about how the church might increase its membership?

The report rather gives the game away by acknowledging that the aim of engaging with FE colleges is to "build a younger and more diverse church" and that "colleges can, especially, be a way to engage with what is often a missing generation... There is genuine potential here to help revitalise the local church in the long term."

It appears the Church of England views FE colleges as a potential source of new recruits, rather than the pluralistic communities of learners and educators that they are.

The lord bishop of Durham confirmed this strategy, stating in the recent Queen's Speech debate: "We as a church recognise that we must become younger and more diverse. Engaging in further education needs to be at the core of

what we do."

He added that the church is "committed to an ongoing working partnership with the secretary of state and the government to explore these issues together".

The report laments the fact that, unlike HE, no Christian church now operates an FE institution, and suggests the establishment of a church "FE Colleges Group".

Even more worryingly, this latest report follows a report published in 2020 called Faith in Higher Education – A Church of England vision, also under Bishop Dakin, which states that the church's approach to further and higher education is theological, not educational.

That report declares that education and wisdom are achieved by "aligning all our ways – our thinking, acting, belonging – with those of God".

Most strikingly, it adds "sustained theological attention is needed on the distinct questions of the content of any particular discipline or field, the methodologies with which these are examined and interpreted, and the curriculum through which it

is taught".

In the 21st century, no educational institution should be subject to the constraints of theological doctrine.

"In the 21st century, no educational institution should be subject to the constraints of theological doctrine"

One proposal being considered by the Church of England is that "each diocese should engage with further education and sixth-form colleges in its strategic planning and an appropriate member of the bishop's staff should have responsibility for linking diocesan strategy with FE and sixth-form college activity".

But fewer than one per cent of college students are members of their particular church. Meanwhile, governors of FE colleges are charged with developing an independent strategy for the benefit of all their students.

Another proposal in the report is to provide house-for-duty posts and to "reimagine chaplaincy provision". This neglects the fact that FE colleges already have a cadre of professionally qualified and committed staff who work diligently to enhance the welfare and wellbeing of students of all backgrounds, abilities and aspirations.

Support for all students' wellbeing is fundamental to the pluralistic life of our FE colleges and the communities they serve.

While, of course, most individual chaplains are well-intentioned, a "cuckoo-in-the-nest" chaplaincy whose first loyalty is towards a particular church would privilege a very small minority of staff and students. This would undermine every college's purpose of building a community in which people of all faiths or none have equal opportunity.

The potential for conflict between the doctrinal beliefs of chaplains – for example, on same-sex marriage, other faiths or LGBT+ rights – and the inclusive support provided by the professional pastoral support teams in FE would also be ever present.

Support for further education from any source is, of course, to be welcomed, but the Church of England's latest proposals have little to do with education and skills and much to do with reversing its own declining numbers amongst young people.

That's why the specific proposals in this report must be resisted.



KIRSTIE DONNELLY

Chief executive,
City & Guilds



The government must do far more to fix the new labour market crisis

We need a revolution to close the potentially disastrous skills gap, writes Kirstie Donnelly

Skills gaps are nothing new. But, since March 2020, the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic and a series of subsequent lockdowns simultaneously unlocked a wave of seismic change in the UK labour market, significantly changing the sorts of skills sought by employers.

With over 800,000 workers displaced from their jobs and 11 million people furloughed, the numbers paint a stark picture of how the pandemic impacted the jobs market.

Yet the UK's shrinking economy is just one piece of the puzzle. Sweeping changes in the way people lived and worked have caused some industries to contract. But new and existing trends – such as digital transformation and automation – have taken off, further propelling labour market transformation.

In our new annual Skills Index report published last week, which is intended to show how skills supply and demand is evolving, we uncovered some striking findings. This includes how demand for skills shot up most notably in the health and social care and tech sectors.

For example, as businesses and individuals increasingly relied on technology for their day-to-day lives, job postings for tech and digital roles rose by 21 per cent between April 2020 to April

2021 alone.

And with remote working creating a plethora of new cyber-security risks for businesses, demand for cyber-security technicians rocketed, rising a staggering 19,222 per cent.

“The reality is that many workers are now facing a five-decade-long career”

Meanwhile, as the pandemic put increased pressure on the health and social care sector, specific technical skills – such as nursing, mental health support and personal care support – were among those that saw the greatest increase in demand in 2020.

Our report also pointed to a growing mismatch between the skills that people possess, and the

skills employers need, suggesting that businesses' productivity is at stake. Fifty-six per cent of organisations faced some kind of barrier to meeting their skills and talent needs, while 61 per cent of working-age adults don't feel they are equipped with the skills they will need in the next five years.

The bottom line is that while many businesses were facing skills gaps before the pandemic, these gaps are now even wider – and are poised to be disastrous unless we urgently reconcile the disparity between skills supply and demand.

The solution? It's no surprise that there's no easy one.

We'll need a revolution, and a significant shift in attitudes.

At an individual level, people need to be equipped to identify skills where they need to develop skills, and where their existing skills are transferable, so that they can seek appropriate support and opportunities – and be empowered to fund their own training if need be.

Employers must facilitate

this process, by providing mechanisms for individuals to understand which skills are likely to be in demand throughout their lifetimes, and by providing employees with the training they need to stay relevant.

The reality is that many workers are now facing a five-decade-long career – so, practically, this will mean a mixture of better “all ages” careers advice, and a commitment to re-skilling and upskilling workers throughout their working lives.

Meanwhile, the government must provide a wider programme of support for people who need to retrain. The Lifetime Skills Guarantee makes headway on providing such support, allowing adults without a level 3 qualification access to a free college course.

But it is limited to lower-skilled individuals and misses others who may have lost their jobs due to the pandemic now, those who will do in the future, or those who are older.

Current government support doesn't go far enough – we need a less restrictive offer available to all those displaced so that we can retrain workforces and divert labour to where it's needed.

This sort of countrywide culture shift won't be easy, but if we seize the opportunity with both hands, this could be the jumpstart we need to create a long overdue lifelong skills culture that works for all.



CHRIS WEBB

CEO and Principal, Bradford College



Colleges are unfairly being held back by their past

The government is measuring colleges by using unfair historical references that are out of date and do not present a level playing field, writes Chris Webb

Colleges that are graded 3 and have shown significant improvement are consistently being denied access to money due to their Ofsted grade especially when they have been waiting for an inspection for some considerable time. However, colleges that are a grade one that haven't been inspected of over 10 years now continue to have access to the capital funds. It doesn't seem fair and it's not a level playing field. Students are being denied high quality facilities and investment in this process.

Bradford College has been stuck in limbo for over a year now and despite raising this with Department for Education and Education and Skills Funding Agency the barriers restricting funding opportunities still remain. At the current time there is no opportunity for the college to get an Ofsted 'good or better' until Ofsted resumes its inspections in the autumn by which time the college will have missed out on another year of opportunities.

Colleges are measured using historical references that are out of date, and a result of 10 years ago and should not be used to determine its current and future capability.

The system rewards the privileged. If you have a financial

health notice to improve, or even a satisfactory health rating, you are excluded from applying. Ultimately the system rewards colleges who have sufficient income at the detriment of colleges who desperately need the money. It allows colleges that have money, opportunity for more money and those colleges that need money and support to catch up are excluded.

“There has to be a review in order for there to be a level playing field set”

The system pushes “good and outstanding” colleges forward and restricts those that are graded as “requires improvement” or ‘inadequate’. There is no way to bridge the gap. Simply by not allowing colleges to move forward it ensures that the gap widens. If this was a classroom you would put in more support for those students who are struggling whilst

still supporting those doing well. The system should recognise this concept but the current process seeks to exclude those colleges from the classroom.

Bradford College has ambitions to develop its higher and professional technical offer but is not eligible to apply for the Office for Students growth fund because the rules state “If you are eligible for an Ofsted inspection, you must have a rating of ‘outstanding’ or ‘good’”.

Higher and technical education is delivered at level 4 and 5 which is not graded using an Ofsted measure. The college has a number of good quality measures, positive QAA visits, TEF Bronze, and an Ofsted ‘good’ for our level 6 provision in our Initial Teacher Education. The key question is why is the system not using more relevant measures rather than choosing to operate a single source of grading to determine funding opportunities that do not relate to the level 4/5 provision being bid for.

The college had been delivering technical education and

apprenticeships through one of its subsidiary companies and due to changes in funding, subcontracting rules and the restructuring deal we have been forced to subsume the company into the college. This has resulted in the provision which was good with elements of outstanding now forced to be viewed under the college umbrella of requires improvement.

The system should be determined on an individualised case rather than single source evaluations. The system is arbitrary, rather than based on reason or sense. A sixth forms that is good could effectively apply for provision that it has never delivered and has no track record by the outcome being based purely of an Ofsted grade. How is this fair? Especially as universities that are not subject to Ofsted can apply.

There has to be a review in order for there to be a level playing field set. In addition to this the college has a restructuring agreement that severely restricts the college's opportunity to spend its own cash; which means it is restricted to an annual capital limit of £1.3 million and a cash sweep being applied for any over performance so not allowing the college to build any significant future cash reserves to re-invest in students.

What chance does the college have of positioning itself as a college for the future, when simply held back by its past. Two years ago the college secured a ‘fresh start’, that clearly isn't the case if it's past determines its future.



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READER'S REPLY

Board member quits in protest over sink-or-swim tech venture at Capital City College Group

If this was April, I would have thought this was a spaghetti tree. To the remaining governors and the SMT who are going along with this idea, ask how would Ofsted rate this as quality of education. I went into this sector to support and help learners of all backgrounds to succeed. I am sure that if anyone at Ofsted has read this, they will be planning an early monitoring visit to test out how this will be delivered in terms of the three 'i's and why not all governors are supportive of the intent.

Phil Hatton, website

FE needs to innovate and develop new business models, but this project doesn't appeal to me. It sounds very risky. I'd like to see what market testing has been done before committing to it. Has any been done? There are market-testing models that are tried, tested & proven.

Stefan Drew, Twitter

Uproar as DfE researchers to ban jobless bootcamp applicants... at random

Randomised control trials in education are so problematic. Another example is evaluating GCSE maths retake interventions: how do you find a "business as usual"/placebo setting which isn't trying to raise achievement in multiple ways? The 'medical' model doesn't transfer to complex social processes.

Eddie Playfair, Twitter

Is there anyone left at the DfE with any ethics?

Jenny Warren, Twitter

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Government careers agency bemoans lack of Baker clause compliance

I have been saying for ages that a lack of transparency in schools regarding the options open to pupils post-16 should be a limiting grade on Ofsted inspections of said schools and should automatically mean the school cannot get higher than a grade 3 for leadership and management. You'd soon see a massive shift in attitudes towards what is a perennial problem.

Richard Moore, website

Can the Centres for Excellence master the GCSE resit problem?

If you want to increase the maths pass rate keep it simple. Routine. Relationship. Repeat.

Rich Walsh, Twitter

The focus should be on achieving the GCSE as part of their college journey, not expecting results straight away. Students are capable, they just need time, support and faith.

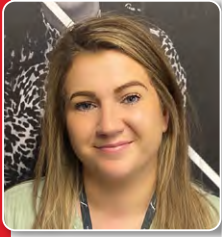
Debra, Twitter

Always fascinated by Alison Wolf's claim that GCSE maths shouldn't be compulsory. Is she ruining some unintended outcomes? Because that's sort of what the Wolf Review was looking for...?

Daniel Phillips, Twitter

Bulletin

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Lizzy Owen

Director of curriculum growth, design and enhancement, Learning Curve Group

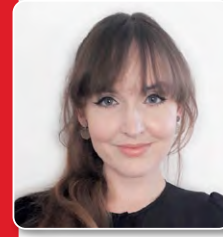
Start date June 2021

Previous Job

Head of creative and curriculum development, Learndirect Group

Interesting fact

She bakes and decorates wedding cakes in her spare time.



Sian Thomas

Executive director for international, The Skills Network

Start date April 2021

Previous job

Director, Global Prosperity Skills

Interesting fact

She started kayaking and hula hooping during lockdown last year.

Movers & Shakers

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



Phil Sayles

Principal, Bournemouth & Poole College

Start date January 2022

Previous job

Principal, Selby College

Interesting fact

He edited a student newspaper at university and won a national short story award in his 20s.



Paul Wakeling

Executive director of curriculum and quality, The Skills Network

Start date April 2021

Previous job

Group deputy principal, New City College

Interesting fact

He tries to get "into the hills" as much as he can, and spent last Saturday doing the three peaks of Yorkshire and has been "limping around the office ever since".

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

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