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Apprenticeships guidance in schools isn't as bad as you think

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HALF OF APPRENTICES DROPOUT



Latest stats 'deeply concerning' say providers as DfE stands by standards

FEWEEK

MEET THE TEAM



Shane Chown
EDITOR

@SHANECHOWN
SHANE.CHOWN@FEWEEK.CO.UK



Shane Mann
MANAGING DIRECTOR

@SHANERMANN
SHANE@LSECT.COM



Billy Camden
DEPUTY EDITOR

@BILLYCAMDEN
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK



Jess Staufenberg
COMMISSIONING EDITOR

@STAUFENBERGJ
JESS.STAUFBENBERG@FEWEEK.CO.UK



Will Nott
SENIOR REPORTER

@WILL_NOTT1
WILLIAM.NOTT@FEWEEK.CO.UK



Simon Kay
SENIOR DESIGNER

SIMON@FEWEEK.CO.UK

THE LSECT TEAM

HEAD DESIGNER
Nicky Phillips
OPERATIONS AND FINANCE MANAGER
Victoria Boyle
SALES MANAGER
Bridget Stockdale

SALES EXECUTIVE
Tony Hudson
EVENT MANAGER
Frances Ogefere Dell
SENIOR ADMINISTRATOR
Evie Hayes
OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR - APPRENTICE
Zoe Tuffin

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Learning & Skills Events,
Consultancy and Training Ltd
c/o Mindspace,
9 Appold Street,
London EC2A 2AP
T: 020 8123 4778
E: news@feweek.co.uk

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Skills bill blow: Level 3 defunding timeline to go ahead as planned

SHANE CHOWEN
SHANE.CHOWEN@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Moves to withdraw funding from level 3 qualifications that overlap with T Levels will continue as planned as the government sees off another attempt, through the skills bill, to force a delay.

An amendment to the skills and post-16 education bill, which would have prevented the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) from withdrawing funding for level 3 qualifications for at least three years, had achieved a majority in the House of Lords just last week.

However, the government was able to use its majority in the House of Commons on Monday to remove it from the bill.

That amendment was originally tabled in the Lords by David Blunkett, who served as Tony Blair's secretary of state for education from 1997 to 2001.

Blunkett told *FE Week* that he "remains absolutely convinced that the introduction of T Levels should in no way be an excuse for withdrawing the choice and opportunity for young people who wish to explore more broad-based pathways to jobs".

However, he believes there was a "feeling of inevitability that the government would get their way".

James Kewin, deputy chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges Association and a leading figure in the #ProtectStudentChoice campaign, said the government has "passed up a golden opportunity to adopt an evidence-based approach to qualification reform".

"A delay to the defunding timetable would have given ministers time to consider the evidence on both groups of qualifications before making far-reaching, potentially irreversible, decisions about the funding of level 3 BTECs," he told *FE Week*.

The bill must now return to the Lords to agree or disagree with the changes made by



the Commons this week.

FE Week can reveal that Blunkett won't push the issue of level 3 defunding any further. "In these circumstances, it would appear to be extremely challenging to continue the standoff with the Commons, but I don't believe this is the end of the story by any means," he said.

"All those with a real interest in the future of young people will eventually understand that those of us engaged in seeking to change the government's mind were thinking about a very different employment landscape of the future, and not some nostalgia for the past.

"We are the futurists, predicting the kind of preparation for work which will be commonplace in ten years' time."

As this last remaining issue of contention now appears to have been cleared, the bill is free to receive Royal Assent to become law in the coming weeks.

Government bows to pressure on beefed-up Baker clause

MPs unanimously supported a government-backed amendment to the skills bill that will double the number of mandatory encounters schools pupils have with providers of technical education and apprenticeships.

Training providers and colleges have complained for years that the current law on

careers guidance encounters in schools, known as the Baker clause, is not being followed.

Members of the House of Lords, opposition MPs and prominent Conservative MP Robert Halfon have been making the case for months that the government's original proposal of three mandatory encounters wasn't enough.

In fact, Halfon recently proposed that the government should insist on nine encounters over a pupil's secondary school education.

Following this pressure, the government has now changed its own bill and settled on mandating six encounters in the wording of the bill.

Speaking from the despatch box, skills minister Alex Burghart said the skills bill will "boost productivity and level up our country".

Burghart said the government's new position "should help ensure that young people meet a greater breadth of providers and crucially should prevent schools from simply arranging one provider meeting and turning down all other providers".

"The underpinning statutory guidance will include details of the full range of providers that we'd expect all pupils to have the opportunity to meet during their time at secondary school," he said.

News

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DfE expands eligibility for 16-19 tuition fund

BILLY CAMDEN
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

The 16-to-19 tuition fund will be opened up next year to students who have not achieved a grade 6 in English or maths GCSE, the government has announced.

But a sector leader has warned this eligibility extension has been introduced too late and predicts "many" colleges and training providers will be forced to return unspent funds.

The tuition fund was first rolled out in 2020/21, backed by £96 million, as part of the government's Covid-19 education catch-up package.

It was extended into 2021/22 with an additional £102 million. An extra £222 million has since been made available to run over 2022/23 and 2023/24.

The fund aims to support small-group tuition for sixth form-aged students in English, maths and other subjects that have been disrupted by the pandemic. Students have so far been eligible if they have not achieved a GCSE grade 4 or 5 in English and/or maths or have a grade 4 or above and are from an

economically disadvantaged background.

Colleges, sixth forms and other training providers have complained that the eligibility criteria is too restrictive.

In response, the DfE announced this week that from 2022/23: "Students who have not achieved a grade 6 in English and/or maths at age 16 will be eligible to receive tuition support."

Students in receipt of 16-to-19 bursary funding will also be eligible to receive tuition support next year, "even where they do not meet the current eligibility criteria of living in the 27 per cent most economically deprived areas of the country".

James Kewin, deputy chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges Association, welcomed the move as it "will ensure more students will benefit from small-group tuition".

But he warned: "As demand for the tuition fund far outstrips the number of eligible students, and as these new flexibilities do not kick in until next year, it means many institutions may still end up returning unspent funds for 2021/22.

"That does not reflect lack of need – quite the opposite – it reflects that narrowness of the eligibility criteria."

Kewin added that it would make more sense to allow colleges and providers to identify the students that should benefit from the fund and permit any unspent funds from 2021/22 to be carried over into next year.

The DfE also announced this week there will be an automatic renewal process for colleges and providers who received 16-to-19 tuition funding in 2021/22. Those who have not yet accessed the fund will need to opt in through a digital form.

The requirement for colleges and providers to publish a "statement of intent" on how they intend to deliver the fund will be removed next year and replaced with the submission of an "end of year financial report".

Jane Hickie, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, welcomed the extension of the fund but called on the DfE to go further by opening it up to apprentices.

"This does extend the lack of parity with 16- to 19-year-old apprentices who are not eligible for this support," she said.

"Therefore, AELP would like to see this fund expanded to treat work and classroom-based provision equally."

'Frustrating' but 'not surprising': ESFA extends AEB contracts for one more year

BILLY CAMDEN
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

National adult education budget procured contracts are being extended for another year, the Education and Skills Funding Agency has announced.

Training providers that were successful in a controversial tender to win adult education funding from central government in 2021/22 will have their allocations renewed into 2022/23 for one year.

In total, £74 million was allocated to private providers this year, which was down by one-fifth on the £92 million in the last AEB tender from 2017.

FE Week analysis shows the number of private providers with a direct ESFA AEB contract has now shrunk by almost 60 per cent, from 208 to 88.

Several long-running providers who missed out on the contracts previously accused the ESFA of using last year's AEB tender process to

"manoeuvre its hidden agenda" of shrinking the private provider market – as they spoke out about "horrendous" bid rejections.

There has been a mixed reaction to the announcement that there will be no new procurement for 2022/23.

Mark Dawe, chief executive of The Skills Network, said: "After the disappointment of missing out on a contract in the last procurement by one mark, and no real explanation as to how we dropped marks, we would obviously like to go for it again.

"However, I'm not sure the sector could take another procurement at the moment after the mess we had to endure last year and the disruption it causes. The ESFA needs to get their procurement processes right before they run another one."

Simon Ashworth, director of policy at the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, said the contracts extension is a "sensible decision", given the "difficulties" of procurement last year.

"An extra procurement exercise covering a single year period would have resulted in a disproportionate level of disruption as well as unnecessary added costs for providers and taxpayers," he added.

Jill Whittaker, managing director of HIT Training, said the contracts extension is "not exactly surprising" but expressed frustration at the decision.

"As a provider who lost their AEB contract of 15 years last year due to a submission error that left the information incomplete, I am very disappointed at not having the opportunity to rectify the situation," she told *FE Week*.

The majority of HIT's AEB was used for functional skills. Whittaker said her provider still has large volumes of these learners, and the only current option is to put them on to an apprenticeship instead, which she says is a "mammoth task" and "off-putting" for some.

Apprenticeship drop-out rates: so high they would lead to an inquiry if replicated in A-levels

BILLY CAMDEN
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

FROM FRONT

Nearly half of all apprentices dropped out last year, new government data has revealed.

And revised figures for the year before show the drop-out rate has shot up by a huge amount for 2019/20 after officials fixed an "error" in their original calculations.

Experts have expressed "deep concern" at the high drop-out rate, which one says would result in a "national outcry" and calls for an independent inquiry if it happened with A-levels.

The government has admitted that "more needs to be done" as it investigates the reasons behind the issue for apprenticeships.

National achievement rate tables (NARTs), which show how many apprentices passed, achieved and stayed on to complete their apprenticeship, were published on Thursday morning for the 2020/21 academic year by the Department for Education.

Also published today were revised NARTs for 2019/20. Original figures for that year were published in March 2021 but had to be removed and recalculated when DfE officials identified a blunder.

The data includes a breakdown of the figures for those on the government's new-style apprenticeship "standards", which are designed to be tougher and of higher quality than the old-style "frameworks" which are being phased out.

Included is a "retention rate", which showed that only 53 per cent of apprentices on standards stayed on their programme until their end-point assessment in 2020/21 – meaning that 47 per cent dropped out.

The drop-out rate for frameworks was 17 percentage points lower than standards in



2020/21.

The figure was even worse in 2019/20: original data said the retention rate for standards that year was 60.2 per cent, but this has now been revised down to 46.6 per cent – resulting in a 53.4 per cent drop-out rate. In 2019/20 the revised drop-out rate for frameworks was 22.6 percentage points lower.

The overall drop-out rate for apprenticeships was 41.3 per cent in 2019/20 and 41.2 per cent in 2020/21.

By comparison, latest DfE data shows the drop-out rate for A-levels in 2019 was less than one in ten (8.7 per cent).

There are increasing numbers of apprentices taking the government's new-style standards, which makes the high drop-out rate all the more concerning.

In 2018/19 the proportion of apprentices

on standards stood at 18.5 per cent. In 2019/20 that proportion had increased to 46.3 per cent and for 2020/21 the proportion had reached 65.9 per cent.

Former skills minister Gillian Keegan ordered an investigation into the "astonishingly" high drop-out rate for apprenticeship last year after the fudged 2019/20 figures were published.

Asked for a response to Thursday's revised figures and those for 2020/21, a DfE spokesperson said: "There are many reasons why people move on from apprenticeships, such as changes in family circumstances or getting a promotion.

"We have replaced the old style 'frameworks' with high-quality 'standards'

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CONTINUED

that better reflect employer needs. Standards are rightly more difficult to achieve than frameworks, so lower rates on standards are not unexpected."

The spokesperson added that the department is aware that "more needs to be done to ensure as many people as possible complete their apprenticeship when that's right for them".

Speaking to *FE Week* in February, the DfE's joint minister for FE and HE Michelle Donelan said another reason for drop-outs is because some apprentices achieve professional qualifications to start a job and are offered employment before they sit their end-point assessment. The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education is now looking to align apprentices' end point assessments with professional qualifications to remove this incentive to leave early, she said.

But Donelan insisted there is "no one reason" for the issue.

Tom Richmond, a former adviser to two skills ministers and now director of think tank EDSK, was shocked by the data.

"If half of A-level students were dropping out of their courses before taking their final exams, there would be a national outcry and calls for an independent inquiry," he said.

"We should be equally concerned by these new figures on apprenticeships, as they suggest that there could be some fundamental problems with the delivery of apprenticeship standards."

Simon Ashworth, director of policy at the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, said his membership body is "deeply concerned at the high drop-out rate for apprenticeship standards".

He told *FE Week* that although the employer cash incentives for hiring apprentices "successfully" boosted starts, he claimed "Covid-related disruption" has now impacted the numbers completing their apprenticeship.



Gillian Keegan

Michelle Donelan

Thursday's data shows the overall achievement rate for all apprenticeships hit 57.7 per cent in 2020/21.

This was a slight increase on the achievement rate for 2019/20 which now stands at 57.5 per cent after being originally stated as 64.2 per cent before the DfE's recalculation.

For 2020/21 the achievement rate on standards was just 51.8 per cent, while in 2019/20 it was 45.2 per cent.

The St Martin's Group, which comprises some of the country's largest apprenticeship training providers and employers, warned that this new data could deter people and businesses from starting an apprenticeship.

A spokesperson said: "The latest achievement rates will not surprise many in the sector as they have been

significantly affected by Covid and by people leaving and moving jobs, especially in longer apprenticeship standards.

"Unfortunately, these rates could negatively impact the perception of apprenticeships, making it more challenging to attract prospective apprentices and increase the number of businesses offering them."

Provider-level data was not included in Thursday's publication due to the disruption caused by the pandemic. But they will be shared with Ofsted.

Amanda Spielman, Ofsted's chief inspector, told *FE Week's* Annual Apprenticeship Conference last week that low achievement rates on their own will not result in lower inspection grades.

	All Apprenticeships		Frameworks		Standards	
Year	2019/20 (revised)	2020/21	2019/20 (revised)	2020/21	2019/20 (revised)	2020/21
Retention Rate	58.7%	58.8%	69.2%	70.0%	46.6%	53.0%
Pass Rate	97.9%	98.1%	98.5%	98.5%	97.0%	97.8%
Achievement Rate	57.5%	57.7%	68.1%	68.9%	45.2%	51.8%
Leavers	270,470	275,380	145,200	93,880	125,270	181,490

Source: DfE's apprenticeship and traineeship statistics March 2022



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SEND REVIEW

College heads underwhelmed by SEND green paper

SHANE CHOWEN
SHANE.CHOWEN@FEWEEK.CO.UK

The government's proposals to reform the SEND system have finally been published – but college leaders have been left disappointed.

A consultation launched on Tuesday formed the government's response to the review of SEND education and alternative provision which it launched in September 2019.

The Department for Education (DfE) said its new proposals will build a "single, national SEND and alternative provision system", promising "excellent provision from early years to adulthood".

FE and specialist post-16 SEND providers were hoping to see proposals that would alleviate significant levels of bureaucracy, under-funding and inconsistency in the current system.

The education secretary, Nadhim Zahawi, said that he "wants to end the postcode lottery of uncertainty and poor accountability that exists for too many families, boost confidence in the system across the board and increase local

mainstream and specialist education to give parents better choice".

Yet, FE leaders have expressed disappointment.

The DfE's consultation highlights how young people in alternative provision and those with SEND achieve poorer outcomes at every stage of their education. Key stage 4 destination data shows that only 55 per cent of young people in alternative provision sustained their post-16 destination for more than six months in 2019/20.

Proposals do not contain "any recognition of the needs of young people, nor any explicit support for FE", according to Clare Howard, chief executive at Natspec, the representative body for specialist SEND colleges.

"There are lots of positives in the green paper, including the ambition to apply coherent standards to alternative provision, local inclusion plans overseen by DfE, and banded price tariffs for high needs," said David Hughes, chief executive at the Association of Colleges.

But for Hughes, proposals miss an opportunity to "improve the way funding is fairly and properly allocated" for

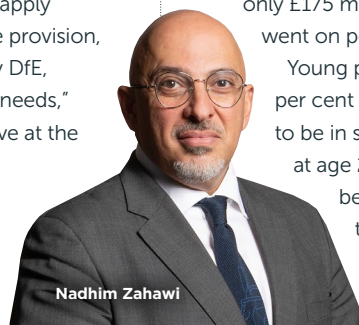
students, particularly those "whose needs are real but less pronounced".

And similarly for Howard, there were matters that should have been responded to that were overlooked. "We have worked hard to impress what's needed for FE – capital funding, improved post-education services for young people to prevent the cliff-edge experience of leaving college, investment in specialist careers advisers, the development of a specialist FE workforce – the list goes on. The consultation was an opportunity to shine a light on issues for young people in FE, and it appears to have been missed," she told *FE Week*.

The review itself even highlights that of the £2.2 billion extra spent on high-needs funding in 2020/21 compared to 2014/15, only £175 million of that increase went on post-16 provision.

Young people with SEN are 25 per cent less likely than their peers to be in sustained employment at age 27 and are more likely to become long-term NEET, the government says.

The consultation closes on July 1, 2022.



Nadhim Zahawi

PROPOSALS AT A GLANCE

IMPROVING SEND STUDENTS' TRANSITION TO FE

A set of national standards for young people's transition from one provider to another will provide "consistent, timely, high-quality transition preparation", according to the consultation.

These will act as a "common point of reference", detailing what support should be made available in mainstream settings and when an education and health care plan (EHCP) is needed.

For alternative provision, "successful transition to post-16" education and training is listed as one of five proposed "key outcome" measures for a new national performance framework. An expert working group will be formed to advise the government on developing this framework.

DIGITAL, STANDARDISED EHCPs

The government wants to introduce standardised, digital education and health care plan templates to reduce variations between

councils and bureaucracy.

These may include photos or videos to give a "holistic picture" of the young person and would allow for "better data collection" – including "anonymous tracking of progress towards outcomes" and prevalence of need.

LOCAL SEND INCLUSION PLANS, NATIONAL FUNDING TARIFFS

New local SEND partnerships will be established by local authorities to produce local inclusion plans.

The plans will be strategic documents that set out what services are available and what needs to be commissioned in order to meet the new national SEND standards.

Funding to support those plans will be determined by a new national framework of banding and price tariffs. The government says this "should address concerns about the inconsistency in current local authority arrangements" but also recognises the complexities involved. It has committed to small-scale pilots with some high-cost provision before "carefully sequencing" a full rollout.

CAREERS AND EMPLOYMENT

The government is proposing to "improve careers guidance" with "better information about the support that is available as [young people with SEND] move in to work".

However, the consultation doesn't explain in much detail what this will look like, who will have access and at what stage in education.

The consultation does say improved careers support will be delivered via careers hubs "tailored to meet the needs of young people with SEND" which are "currently" supported by the Careers & Enterprise Company.

The DfE also confirms that it will use statutory guidance to force employer representative bodies to say how they will address local SEND employment gaps in their local skills improvement plans.

There is also a commitment to double the number of supported internships over the next three years.

Opinion

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SEND REVIEW

Specialist SEND colleges go unmentioned in the green paper – that must change

CLARE
HOWARD

Chief executive, Natspec

The government should mandate local authorities to include specialist colleges in the new inclusion plans, writes Clare Howard

Nadhim Zahawi introduced the long-awaited SEND green paper on Tuesday with the promise of “a more inclusive and financially sustainable system, where every child and young person will have access to the right support, in the right place, at the right time”.

But will the proposals work for further education? And will they help specialist colleges to contribute to the system in a meaningful way?

Unfortunately, FE and preparation for adulthood make up only two of the 100-plus pages, and much of that has already been announced. As for specialist colleges, they are barely mentioned!

None of this would matter if all of the issues and solutions applied equally to colleges as well as to schools. Some of them do – proposals for standardised EHCPs, consistent national standards and local inclusion plans could all bring benefits for FE if properly implemented.

But much of the green paper is taken up with issues that predominately affect schools.

Where there are measures specific to FE, specialist colleges are mostly out of scope, for example, in relation to the skills bill requirements and the FE performance dashboard.

Overall, at the heart of the green paper is an ambition for a SEND system that is “more inclusive” and “financially sustainable”. So, for instance, the government argues that more pupils should remain in inclusive, less costly mainstream provision.

But how does this relate to colleges? With 90 per cent of college students with EHCPs already in mainstream settings, we don’t need any drivers to increase the proportions of students with SEND in mainstream settings.

What we do need is a reasonable level of funding, and access to more specialist expertise.

So the government must increase funding for those on SEN support in colleges, to match what is available for school children. Colleges also need help in addressing the recruitment and retention crisis for specialist staff across the sector.

The green paper also has a section on investing in high-quality specialist placements, but it focuses on developing local maintained and free special schools, to reduce the reliance on

independent special schools. It has nothing to say about supporting specialist FE provision.

What we need is a clear acknowledgement of the role of different types of FE providers, and a funding and commissioning system that is consistent across both general and specialist FE colleges. This would allow LAs to commission joint placements and encourage joint working.

“Specialist college buildings should be eligible for the £2.6 billion capital funding”

An end to the binary place-planning system would open up new opportunities for students with SEND.

Let’s turn now to achieving financial viability. Spend on specialist FE provision has not risen in the same way as it has for schools. Local authority data show that spending from the high-needs

pot on post-16 specialist providers for 2021/22 is actually lower than it was in 2017/18. So there is really no financial imperative to save money by reducing the number of placements in specialist colleges.

Government should acknowledge the critical role played by specialist colleges, and mandate LAs to include them within new local SEND partnerships and inclusion plans. The uncertainty of annual funding agreements should also end.

At the very least, with 58 per cent of specialist college buildings now in need of urgent repair, government should make them eligible for the FE capital transformation fund and mandate LAs to invest a proportionate amount of the new £2.6 billion SEND capital funding to FE.

Finally, inclusion plans must end the knee-jerk creation of new colleges and replace that with planned investment into existing colleges to meet demand where that is more appropriate.

Any new national banding system either needs to be extremely flexible to accommodate young people with the most complex needs who do not fit neatly into standard categories – or it should be acknowledged that these individuals sit outside of it.

We cannot afford another legislative framework that does not deliver on its intentions, and we are determined that this opportunity is not lost.



Opinion

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SEND REVIEW

Digitising EHCPs does not solve the huge waiting lists for them



SAM PARRETT

Chief executive, London South East Colleges and FE adviser to the Office for Students' disabled students commission

Students are still desperately waiting for education, health and care plans – and this support should continue into HE in some cases, writes Sam Parrett

The long-awaited SEND green paper recognises the many challenges the sector currently faces. From inconsistent, overly bureaucratic processes and long delays in processing EHCPs, to a national shortage of SEND professionals, including educational psychologists and speech therapists – these are common issues that our own providers deal with every day.

So it's clear that reform is needed, and it is positive to finally have movement towards some real change.

We know first-hand that parents and carers of learners with SEND often struggle to access the support they need.

CAMHS waiting lists are extremely long, with mental health issues among young people at an all-time high. The entire system is stretched to unprecedented levels post-pandemic.

FE providers can't tackle the problems by themselves. Ensuring a student with SEND can reach their full potential relies on a fully holistic approach, with input from many other agencies, including health and social services.

Getting a timely EHCP is a fundamental part of this process. Yet this has become a major issue and in many cases, is failing to support the families who need it most.

The green paper's commitment to digitising EHCPs makes sense in terms of bringing the system into the 21st century and will hopefully make them easier to use and understand.

However, this is evading the real problem. We are seeing students who desperately need to access special provisions but are awaiting an EHCP. We can't take them on until they have this document, even when their need for special education is clearly having a negative impact on their mental and emotional health, as well as on their learning.

“We can't take students on until they have this document”

If young people can't access the system in the first place, any improvement measures within the system will obviously be less impactful.

That's rather ironic, considering the green paper's consistent focus on early intervention and national standards.

Our own providers work across three local authorities, and it's clear that parents and carers can find themselves in a postcode lottery when it comes to funding and support.

Standardising this – as is being proposed with a national



framework – would be of huge benefit, providing clarity on entitlement fairly across the country for each child.

And where we talk about enabling a young person to reach their full potential, this must focus on their entire educational journey if it is to be truly meaningful.

Our college-sponsored MAT very much supports the retention of 0-25 EHCPs as they provide a clear line of sight to adulthood, supporting parents and students through each transition phase.

However, EHCPs usually cease on admission to higher education.

As the FE adviser to the Office for Students' disabled students' commission, I have argued that extending EHCP support for academically able SEND students would improve transition and provide continuity.

The green paper proposals recognise this could be a real improvement on the current arrangements, which are bureaucratic, time-consuming and lead to duplication.

They involve applying for the disabled students' allowance, which is a process that all too often

leaves students on a cliff edge and at a significant educational disadvantage to their peers when starting HE courses.

Students need access to high-quality, personalised support from day one. This must then continue throughout their educational journey so they can progress successfully into appropriate destinations – whether this is HE, an apprenticeship, employment or a supported internship.

Ensuring alternative provision has an integral role within the SEND system will play an important part in delivering this ambition. Many students in alternative provision have undiagnosed SEND, and improved alignment of the two will facilitate better and earlier intervention – leading to better outcomes for young people later.

So all in all, the proposals in this green paper are encouraging and recognise many of the challenges we face.

But there is scope for improvement on the journey from green paper to enacted reform – and precious little time to deliver necessary change for struggling young people and families.

News

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‘A model for the sector’: Bedfordshire college chiefs announce merger plan

BILLY CAMDEN
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Central Bedfordshire College is set to merge with The Bedford College Group, it has been announced this week.

The two colleges' plan for the "strategic" merger is to take effect from February 1, 2023.

It is hoped the move will enable Central Bedfordshire College to expand its educational offer and create one "financially strong institution".

Central Bedfordshire College principal Ali Hadawi said: "This merger will enable us to offer additional courses in a wider range of subjects to a larger number of learners, young and old.

"We will also be able to meet the needs of a broader range of businesses across a wide range of industries locally, hence enhancing their competitiveness and success."

The Bedford College Group chief executive Ian Pryce added: "We already have a great relationship with the college, but this will allow us to deepen and build that relationship to create something very special for our community, employers, staff and students."

This isn't the first time Central Bedfordshire College has had its eyes on a merger.

The college had planned to merge with Barnfield College, but this was taken off the table in 2017 after comments were made on local ITV news by Central Bedfordshire's chair James Crabbe, which were taken as a

power grab.

Central Bedfordshire College's accounts show it is in a good financial position, with a £1.4 million surplus recorded for the year ending July 2021. The college taught more than 3,500 students in the same year. Its total income was £16.4 million. The college is rated 'requires improvement' by Ofsted.

This could become a model for mergers in the FE sector

Commenting on the new merger, Crabbe said: "I am confident that this merger of our college, with its strong culture of an inclusive, calm and caring environment for learners and staff, will fit well with the ethos of The Bedford College Group, and could become a model for mergers in the FE sector."

The Bedford College Group was formed in 2017 when Bedford College, which includes Shuttleworth College, merged with Tresham College in Northamptonshire.

The group's accounts show a surplus of £0.885 million in the year ending July 2021, during a year in which it taught more than 16,000

students. Its total income was £57.8 million. The group is rated 'good' by Ofsted.

A spokesperson said that for both learners and staff at Central Bedfordshire College it is "business as usual", with classes and courses continuing as expected while management works behind the scenes to "ensure a seamless transition".

Allan Schofield, chair of The Bedford College Group, said: "The Bedford College Group is delighted to have been selected as the merger partner for Central Bedfordshire College.

"It brings together the two largest post-16 educators in the local authority area and creates a financially strong institution which will allow us to expand the educational opportunities to everyone in Central Bedfordshire and Luton."



Central Bedfordshire College



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DfE slashes grant funding for ETF

WILL NOTT

WILLIAM.NOTT@FEWEEK.CO.UK

The Education and Training Foundation has had millions of pounds of grant funding cut by the Department for Education.

ETF announced the cuts on Monday, stating that the affected continuing professional development (CPD) programmes include basic skills, essential digital skills, practitioner research, advanced practitioner, and outstanding teaching, learning and assessment.

Analysis of ETF funding documents by *FE Week* shows that grants for these programmes were worth £3,226,124 for 2021/22 – marking a 15 per cent cut to the ETF's overall DfE funding of £21,008,540 for that year.

It is expected that some programmes previously provided by ETF will be put out to tender by the DfE.

ETF's chief executive told *FE Week* that cuts to its grant do not threaten the future of the organisation, and that the move to switch to more tendering for programmes has been coming for a number of years.

The charity would not comment on whether the cuts would result in any redundancies.

The news comes after *FE Week* revealed in March that the DfE grant for ETF's practitioner research programme would not be available in 2022/23.

"The ETF would like to wholeheartedly thank everyone who has made such a success of basic skills-related CPD for FE practitioners over the last eight years," said David Russell, chief executive of the ETF.

"It has been a vital source of support, particularly while the sector tackled the challenge of implementing the GCSE resit policy, but it has also been so much more."

He said programmes such as the advanced practitioner programme, the outstanding teaching, learning and assessment programme, and the practitioner research programme have been "transformational" for many teachers and trainers.



David Russell

"Teachers have told me personally how these programmes 'rekindled their love of teaching', helped elevate their professional development, and in some cases were the difference that kept them in the profession," he added.

The affected programmes fall under the basic skills workforce grant. In June 2021, the DfE awarded ETF £3,226,124 for this grant for the period ending March 31, 2022.

According to the grant letter published on the ETF's website, total grant funding awarded from the DfE was £21,008,540 for the 2021/22 financial year and included: the SEND further education workforce development grant, basic skills workforce grant, further education workforce development grant, and leadership and governance programme development grant.

FE Week contacted the DfE to ask why the funding has been cut.

"We remain committed to supporting FE teachers and the vital work they do in improving achievement in English and maths," a spokesperson said.

"We will continue investing in the English and maths workforce in 2022 and beyond. This includes supporting practitioners to test successful and transferable approaches to improving post-16 level 2 English and maths outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged learners."

They added that the DfE intends to conduct "competitive processes" to enable new programme delivery to commence during 2022/23, including "expert and sector-led English and maths continuing professional

development, as well as robust, large-scale research to develop our evidence base of what works".

ETF said that since 2014, the DfE's basic skills grant to the ETF has been of "great benefit to the sector", providing maths and English CPD support to tens of thousands of colleagues across all types of FE settings.

The support has included online and face-to-face training; one-to-one and group coaching; networks and events; and specialist advice and support. In 2021/22 alone, the ETF delivered more than 240 training events, ran more than 65 networking events, and reached more than 10,000 delegates.

The grant has also supported the creation of resources and training opportunities, such as: functional skills mathematics level 1, GCSE English writing, CPD training for teachers, and teaching functional skills maths.

ETF provided participation figures to *FE Week* for the Practitioner Research programme and the Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

For the Practitioner Research programme there were 188 participants between 2018 and 2022. The OTLA saw 1,249 participants from 2019 to 2022.

The ETF did not provide *FE Week* with figures for the other affected programmes.

"It is both rare and excellent for programme support to last long enough to allow them to grow roots in the sector, and achieve sustainable, irreversible change in the levels of professionalism, collaboration and capacity amongst participants," said Russell.

"This has certainly been the case here, and the legacy of these programmes will live on strongly. We would like to thank everyone from colleagues in the DfE to our fantastic delivery partners who have been part of this successful journey."

"It is the ETF's continuing mission to help practitioners in our sector find new ways to excel and grow, for the benefit of their learners," he added.

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Advertorial

CELEBRATING 110 YEARS OF SUCCESS: THREE REASONS TO ATTEND THE SKILLS AND EDUCATION GROUP ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2022

After two years away, the [Skills and Education Group](#)'s further education and skills conference makes an eagerly anticipated return in 2022.

Our conference is a conference with a difference. While most education conferences tend to be aimed at those in leadership and governance roles, our event is dedicated to growing the potential of practitioners and middle managers – the everyday heroes of further education.

But that's not the only thing that makes our conference unique. Here are a few other reasons why you should consider attending.

Get inspired by changemakers

Further education providers, and the staff who work in them, play an important role in enabling those of all identities and backgrounds to succeed. This will be one of the key themes of our conference.

Our lineup of keynote speakers is headed by Jake Graf and Hannah Graf MBE – the UK's first transgender parents, who through their work inspire communities and individuals across the UK by championing LGBTQ+ equality and representation.

Jake is an actor, writer and director who uses the medium of films to elicit positive

change, giving representation to rarely seen characters and promoting acceptance and understanding. His work is used for educational purposes in universities, schools, prisons, and media events internationally.

Hannah is a Captain in the British Army who has commanded soldiers in countries across the world, including Germany, Canada, Kenya and Afghanistan. She is also a transgender woman whose personal story of transition captured the nation's imagination in 2015.

A true advocate for equality, Hannah has used her public profile to promote a realistic portrayal of transgender individuals in the UK, becoming an inspiration to many people.

Our conference is an opportunity to hear from Jake and Hannah in person and get inspired by them. Not only that, but the conference also features several other high-profile speakers from the world of further education, all of whom play important roles in changing lives through education. You can browse the full lineup of speakers [here](#).

Join us as we champion social mobility

In addition to the keynote addresses, the conference will include two plenary sessions focusing on 'social mobility and social inclusion' and 'removing barriers for adult learners' respectively.

The first session will involve a panel discussion exploring the role that further education plays in social mobility, with a link to the work of the [Skills and Education Group Foundation](#). Founded in 2019, the Foundation provides grant funding for disadvantaged learners, helping them to overcome social barriers and reach their potential. To date,

we have awarded 193 grants totalling £90,275.

Through the Foundation, we come across countless examples of learners who achieve real success in the face of adversity. The panel will feature one of the grant recipients, who will share their inspiring story.

Celebrate the successes of this wonderful sector – together

This year's conference is extra special as it marks the 110-year anniversary of the Skills and Education Group. For over a century, we have been supporting the further education and skills sector – and we couldn't do it without you, the staff.

This conference is for you: a chance for you to connect with colleagues new and old; participate in interactive, thought-provoking workshops; and celebrate everything great about our sector.

Staff from across our membership will be in attendance, meaning this is a great opportunity to network with peers. We will also be joined by several sponsors and exhibitors, including The Skills Network, FE Week and Protocol.

So, if you would like to reflect on past successes, consider current issues in further education, and look ahead to a bright future, do join us on 26 May for an inspiring and celebratory event.



To find out more about what you can expect at the conference, and to book your place, visit our [website](#).

Location: Jurys Inn Hotel, Watling Street, Burbage, Hinckley, LE10 3JA

Date and Time: Thursday 26 May 2022 (08:45 to 17:30)



News

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INSPECTION SECTION

Recovering colleges' latest Ofsted results

Three colleges that have faced significant leadership and financial challenges in recent years had a visit from Ofsted in February and saw their reports published this week. *FE Week* spoke to the leader of each college to find out how they got on.

WILL NOTT
BILLY CAMDEN
NEWS@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Inspection came 'too soon' for Hull College

The interim boss of Hull College has said Ofsted's visit came "too soon" after going through multiple leadership changes since the college's last grade three report in 2019.

Numerous scandals have engulfed the college, which resulted in formal government intervention and seven acting principals over the past two and a half years.

Ofsted inspected the college again in February and gave them a second consecutive overall 'requires improvement' rating.

However, the report rates three out of four of the college's provision types – courses for apprentices, adult learners and learners with high needs – as 'good'. The area where the college continues to struggle is its teaching for 16- to 18-year-olds.

Lowell Williams is in the final days of his second stint as interim chief of the college. He'll hand the reins to Debra Gray, who is moving from The Grimsby Institute (now known as the TEC Partnership), next week.

Reacting to the report, Williams said the new leadership could have done with more time and called on Ofsted to be more aware of individual college circumstances when deciding when to inspect.

"We weren't expecting an inspection so soon. I'm not sure it's helpful or represents good value for the public," he told *FE Week*.

"In the period between that last inspection in 2019 and now there have been seven people who have acted as the



Lowell Williams

principal of the college, if you count me twice. And there has been a pandemic in between, where the college has effectively closed, really."

Williams pressed that the latest new senior team has only been in place for eight months.

"So, the college's journey to recovery, after the instability in leadership, and after

the pandemic, started in August 2021. Quite what the value is in inspecting the college in March 2022 I'm not sure. That said, ironically, it does show that the college is making huge progress and making huge progress quickly, because three out of four the provision types were good."

He added: "I think it would have been better served all round to have had a full academic year. It's very, very difficult to really improve the provision for young people on full-time study programmes unless you've been through a whole academic cycle."

Williams called on Ofsted to work more collaboratively with the FE Commissioner's team and the Education and Skills Funding Agency where there are exceptional circumstances for colleges.

In its report, Ofsted acknowledged that the college's senior leadership team have undergone a "sustained period of instability".

Williams said the staff at Hull College have been "desperately let down by leadership over time" and it's their stewardship of the college that has "meant there was still a college there to recover".

He added: "I'd like to pay tribute to all the staff for their resilience and stewardship of the college during the period of instability. Finally, the college is looking forward to the future with confidence."

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

News

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INSPECTION SECTION

Delayed city-wide review thwarting progress at Southampton City College

The FE Commissioner's failure to resolve questions on a college's financial position has slowed leaders' progress in improving its quality of education, according to Ofsted.

Southampton City College's latest inspection resulted in another 'requires improvement' judgment overall. This follows a previous grade three report back in 2018.

The college is currently surviving on emergency money from the Education and Skills Funding Agency which is due to run out by February 2023.

The FE Commissioner is working on a city-wide review of Southampton's FE provision which aims to ensure the positive long-term future of the college.

However, the college's principal Sarah Stannard has said the review has taken up much of the college leadership's time and limited their ability to make "rapid improvements" to tackle ongoing quality issues – something noted in the Ofsted report.

"We note the inspectors' judgment that the failure of external decision-makers



Sarah Stannard

to resolve questions on the college's financial position and post-16 education in Southampton has taken up much of the college leadership's time and has limited our ability to make rapid improvements," she said.

"This is very frustrating for all at City College. Staff and students have been made to wait too long for a clear way

forward."

Stannard said a clear solution "with a real date" was needed to help college leaders' work on improving the quality of education.

"Much leadership time has necessarily been devoted to negotiations with, and representations to, external bodies," the Ofsted report said.

"This has slowed progress in other aspects of college improvement. Over the past six years, public debate about the college's future has also had a negative impact on staff morale."

Inspectors said that as a result, leaders' efforts to provide high-quality vocational training for students aged 16 to 18 have only been partly successful.

Other findings of the report were that senior leaders do not check the quality of education closely enough.

"Consequently, they have not identified many of the weaknesses that inspectors found during the inspection and have not moved swiftly to put in place effective methods to deal with those that they have identified," inspectors said.

Cornwall College bounces back to 'good'

The chief executive of Cornwall College has said he is "delighted" after a recent Ofsted inspection found senior leaders and governors have "transformed the culture at the college".

Ofsted rated the college 'good' – a jump up from a 'requires improvement' rating they received in 2019.

The college has had its fair share of financial issues, which resulted in a £30 million bailout from government and a controversial campus sale.

The FE Commissioner later suggested the college should merge with Truro and Penwith College, but it was later decided that both colleges should remain standalone.

Cornwall College's fortunes have now turned around, with Ofsted finding that governors, senior leaders and managers have worked "relentlessly to establish the college as an

influential partner in the region".

"Myself, governors and staff are highly delighted with the result, which is the accumulation of an immense effort from everybody which all comes down to putting the learner at the centre of all your decisions," chief executive of Cornwall College John Evans, who took over in 2019, told *FE Week*.

Evans, who is a former Ofsted inspector, said the college has always had some "brilliant niche provision" and lauded the efforts of staff for the latest Ofsted result.

Ofsted's report was largely positive, with inspectors saying that leaders focus consistently on learners and their learning and wellbeing.

"They place a high priority on the importance of good teaching. Leaders have communicated this message to staff,

who share the same high expectations for learners," they said.

Evans told *FE Week* that leaders focused an "immense effort" on improving the quality of teaching learning assessment and the learner experience.

"The college did many things well, but not consistently. And it was pulling together effectively ten campuses and driving the culture of everybody having an uncompromising ambition for their learners," he added.



John Evans

News

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INSPECTION SECTION

Ofsted slams SEND college for 'highly inappropriate' activities

WILL NOTT
WILLIAM.NOTT@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Young adults at a SEND college were taught personal and intimate care in mixed-gender groups and took part in "highly inappropriate" activities, an Ofsted inspection has found.

The watchdog also found the students with special educational needs and disabilities were tube fed and medicated in classrooms in front of their peers and staff.

Ofsted published a damning 'inadequate' report of the Michael Tippett College, an independent specialist college in Balham, south London, this week.

Inspectors uncovered serious failures in safeguarding. These included leaders not developing policies for how staff should manage any potential incidents of harmful sexual behaviour. Learners were also left at risk of "significant harm for longer periods than necessary".

A council is now reviewing any placements it has with the college in light of the findings.

Concerns were first raised at a monitoring visit last year. The college has told *FE Week* that there are no plans for its closure and said that they are making improvements under new leadership.

"The Michael Tippett College accepts the outcome of the Ofsted report. The inspection team were fair and took the time to explain their judgments," acting head of the college, Perry Vlachos, told *FE Week*.

"The college has recently undergone a great deal of change this academic year, especially at the executive and senior management levels. The college recognises that significant improvements are needed."

The Michael Tippett College caters for young adults aged 19 to 25 who

have a range of profound multiple learning difficulties or severe learning difficulties – some with autism spectrum disorder.

At the time of the inspection there were 41 learners. Nearly all were on a three-year preparation for work and life programme.

Ofsted found that learners did not benefit from an effective curriculum. They said it was poorly planned, and learners weren't provided opportunities to develop essential skills needed for adulthood based on what they can already do.

Leaders, trustees and staff were accused of not having sufficient expertise in special educational needs and/or disabilities to ensure that the curriculum was "appropriate and ambitious for learners with complex needs".

Ofsted also found a wide range of safeguarding concerns – saying that learners were not always treated with "respect for their dignity".

As an example, inspectors cited the fact that when supporting learners with tube feeding and medication, staff did so in the classroom in front of other learners and staff.

"Teachers teach sensitive topics such as personal and intimate care in mixed-gender groups, and activities are highly inappropriate," the report added.

Staff and designated safeguarding leads did not follow their own safeguarding policy to make timely referrals to the adult services duty team when vulnerable learners are at risk.

"Consequently, learners remain at risk of

significant harm for longer periods than are necessary," inspectors said.

Safety concerns were previously raised in a monitoring visit that was carried out in November last year, where inspectors found that senior leaders and trustees did not have effective safeguarding arrangements in place.

Ofsted inspectors did note that the new acting head of college and trustees have begun to improve on some of the "significant weaknesses" identified at the previous safeguarding monitoring visit.

"As a result, leaders have ensured that appropriate checks are now in place for current staff to ensure that they are safe to work with the college's learners," inspectors said.

Vlachos told *FE Week* that under his interim management the college is working closely with stakeholders and have begun to "effectively address the issues" raised in the report.

"For example, regarding safeguarding, we have amended our policy to clarify processes and responsibilities and have completed a whole-staff 'Prevent' training."

He claimed the college is not in danger of closing and is planning to make the necessary improvements to enhance the future of the college and our students' outcomes.

But Lambeth Council, the college's local authority, is reviewing its relationship with the college. A spokesperson said:

"The Michael Tippett College in Balham is an independently run specialist education centre located in Lambeth that sits outside local authority control.

"The Ofsted inspection includes concerning findings and we are reviewing any placements we have at the college."



Michael Tippett College

Feature

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GOOD FOR ME
GOOD FOR FE

APRIL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Message from the campaign founders

We are delighted to announce that thanks to the exceptional work of colleges around the country, **the Good for Me Good for FE campaign has this week hit its target of generating £1m of social value!**

This target has been reached several months ahead of schedule, reflecting the incredible support of the sector. Colleges have come on board, mobilised staff and students to get involved in a wide range of community action projects and submitted this data to us.

From foodbank collections and fundraising events through to the setting up of community cafes and volunteering projects – the sector has absolutely embraced GfMGfFE with an amazing response to our call to action.

In recent weeks, our focus has moved to supporting communities further afield with the launch of our Ukraine Crisis Appeal. £1650 has been raised via our Just Giving Platform so far, which has been sent directly to the British Red Cross.

Support for our campaign from organisations including the FA, NAVCA, Scouts and SQL Sport Leaders has been fantastic – and we are delighted to welcome the Mental Health Foundation on board this week as our latest charity partner.

And we have no intention of stopping now! We want to use the momentum we have gathered and continue to generate as much social value as we can by the end of the academic year.

Thank you so much to every college who has supported (and continues to support) Good for Me Good for FE. We are hugely grateful and so proud to be part of such a caring, socially-active sector; truly a group of anchor institutions going above and beyond every day to support their communities.

From the principals of the GfMGfFE founding colleges -

Sam Parrett (LSEC),

Jo Maher (Loughborough),

Stuart Rimmer (East Coast College)

CURRENT TOTALS

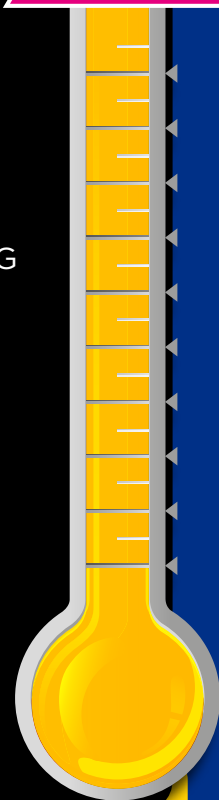
GOAL
REACHED!
£1,000,000

£1.04m
IN SOCIAL
VALUE

55,000
VOLUNTEERING
HOURS

60,000
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FUNDRAISING



WHAT'S NEXT?

Good for Me Good for FE is building on the work colleges do as anchor institutions and as civic leaders. Going forward, the campaign will be working with partners to find ways to ensure it becomes a sustainable part of FE life.

For more information about the campaign and how you and your college can get involved, visit www.GoodforMeGoodforFE.co.uk



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Feature

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GOOD FOR ME GOOD FOR FE

RESPONSE TO GFMGFFE

"At City College, we let our students choose the campaigns and causes that are important to them. The college's onsite foodbank was set up after students realised their peers were missing out on their education just to be able to feed their families. They're passionate about supporting those in need - even those students who don't have a lot themselves."

"Our students get a real sense of wellbeing when given the opportunity to support their peers and others facing hardship, and I know all who have been part of the Good for Me Good for FE campaign are delighted to have contributed to this nationwide campaign. We are really proud of them and they should be proud of themselves."

Chaz Talbot, Student Experience Manager, City College Plymouth,

"I am really proud of the work our staff & students continue to do to support our wider community. Whether it is taking part in social action projects with NCS or DoFE, working with local Food Poverty Alliance charities to provide over 30,000 meals for vulnerable families, or volunteering with a wide range of agencies across the district, we value our place at the heart of our community."

"LMC has won a number of awards for embedding 'citizenship' into its curriculum and this remains a high priority for the College, and reflects the values of the GoodForMeGoodForFE initiative"

Wes Johnson, Principal, Lancaster and Morecombe College

"Being part of the G4MG4FE has been a great experience for everyone at South Essex College. The campaign has brought a sense of community back to the college after what was a challenging two years for all during COVID."

"Staff and students alike focused their efforts into the food banks, and being able to handover such a large quantity of goods to the local foodbanks at Christmas was

CASE STUDY

Sheffield College

The Health and Social Care department at The Sheffield College hosted The Sheffield College's Got Talent, attracting students from across the college.

In total, just over £400 was raised by selling tickets to enjoy the event and by charging an entrance fee for performers taking part. The money has been donated to Comic Relief and to support refugees from Ukraine. They also unearthed some real hidden talents in the process - from

actors and musicians to singers and dancers, and even a front flip which took the audience by surprise!



CASE STUDY

Loughborough College

A team from Loughborough College has donated a day to help a Charnwood-based charity which provides vital support for



homeless families and vulnerable people.

The team of managers volunteered their time to work on a range of tasks, from painting and gardening to cleaning and sorting donations, for Falcon Support Services in Loughborough - as part of the college's Good for Me, Good for FE campaign

Rachel Hall, Deputy CEO at Falcon Support Services, said: "I absolutely love being involved in hosting these Team Building Volunteer Days for businesses, and in this instance Loughborough College. It's such a great chance for them to feel the community spirit, talk to our service users and get involved in supporting the homeless in our local area. It hopefully provided a real insight into the charity and chance to join the Falcon family."

a real highlight. We now have a monthly Community Champion to celebrate and showcase our staff that volunteer in the local area and they all wear their pin badges with pride. This is the start of something much, much bigger"

Brad Brooks, Assistant Principal Student Experience, South Essex College

"We are proud to part of a campaign that embodies our values of kindness,

unity and excellence and our college community who have collectively raised thousands for worthy causes and supported our most vulnerable students through our student food bank. We are excited about our new initiatives, such as our Charitable Tuesdays, to further our efforts to raise more social value in our community."

Jane Simpson, Executive Director of Human Resources & OD, Kirklees College

BTEC | **20**
AWARDS | **22**

ENTER THE 2022

BTEC Showstopper Challenge

The BTEC Showstopper Challenge is an annual competition that gives learners the chance to perform at the BTEC Awards ceremony in London.

Why should you enter?

- ▶ Showcase your BTEC learners' creative talents including music, dance, singing and dramatic performances
- ▶ A chance to perform on stage in front of more than 250 people including winners, industry stakeholders, employers and BTEC ambassadors
- ▶ A public vote during the ceremony, which will also be live streamed globally, for the award of overall Showstopper Challenge winner 2022.

International nominations are welcome, but winners will be shown via video at the live event

Please visit ▶ btec.co.uk/awards for more information or email us at btecawards@pearson.com

#BTECShowstopperChallenge2022

Profile

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INTRODUCING

JOHN BLAKE

Director for fair access and participation, Office for Students

JESS STAUFENBERG
@STAUFENBERGJ

John Blake, the new director for fair access and participation at the Office for Students, is heavily steeped in schools policy – but now he's examining HE provision in FE settings. What does he want to know? He sits down with Jess Staufenberg

If you're from the schools world, you'll probably know all about John Blake, the new director for fair access and participation at the Office for Students. And if you're in FE and watch the schools world with a weather eye, your recent

frantic internet searches will likely have told you the basics. But for many in FE, the man appointed in November to one of the most influential posts in tertiary education will be something of a mystery.

First off, he's a highly engaging, energetic person, who listens and responds to ideas with genuine enthusiasm. In terms of his career to date, think of the most influential college groups in FE, and know that Blake has worked for their equivalents among multi-academy trusts. Having been president at Oxford University Students' Union, he became a history teacher in a grammar school, took various head of history roles, and joined academically selective sixth form the

London Academy of Excellence. (As a point of interest, some months before he joined LAE, *FE Week's* sister paper *Schools Week* revealed students were being forced out in year 12 for not having 'C' grades at AS level. One nearby FE college principal confirmed he had been taking in the booted-out students.)

Blake then worked for the Harris Federation, a top-results academy trust, before becoming head of education at the right-leaning Policy Exchange think tank, which is where he first became an eduTwitter household name.

Then he moved to director of policy and strategy at the Now Teach charity for career switchers, and also became the first ever head of

Profile

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Blake and his brother at their Oxford graduation



Blake with all three of his children

public affairs for an academy trust, at Ark Schools, giving voice to the academies sector in the corridors of power.

Blake starts off by explaining to me that his centre-left politics did not stop him from sympathising deeply with elements of what Michael Gove was trying to do from 2010. He may have been a prominent trade union activist and founder of grassroots network Labour Teachers, but “it was clear to me that schools policy wasn’t in a healthy place,” he says. “I can write you a list as long as your arm about what I disagreed with Michael Gove about, but there was a genuine commitment to begin a really strong dialogue about what the problems were, particularly in curriculum and assessment,” he explains.

That position explains why he became a member of Parents and Teachers for Excellence, a campaign group that favours rigorous testing and curriculum in education, and which has contained politicians’ favoured educators. (One of its core members, Rachel de Souza, is now the children’s commissioner, and another, Mark Lehain, is now a special advisor to Nadhim Zahawi. So Blake is among old colleagues as he heads up the Office for Students.)

So far, so un-FE, I hear you say. Why is he relevant now?

As a former history teacher, Blake dives enthusiastically into a potted history of the Office for Students to explain. When top-up higher education fees were introduced, so were

‘access agreements’ from 2004 under the Office for Access. Any university or college that wanted to charge the higher fees had to have an access agreement. Then in 2016, the government wanted to shake up how HE was regulated, bringing various different regulatory bodies (including OfA and the Higher Education Funding Council for England) under one body: the newly created Office for Students. Access and participation plans were also introduced (with fees having tripled in 2012, to £9,000).

“We need to understand from the FE sector what they will be looking for from us”

Now, however, the DfE wants “greater clarity” in the plans, so Blake is overseeing a “mass variation process” of them, beginning in a couple of weeks. Providers will need to clearly state what they are doing around access and participation, including school engagement and improvement, and Blake’s team will be considering possible regulatory framework changes.

The access and participation plan itself is a big job for a provider – the OfS supplies only a loose template, says Blake, and the plans “tend to be

very thick documents, with a lot of analysis”.

More recently, feedback to the OfS from smaller providers, including in FE, has led Blake to the view that access and participation plans can be a real burden for less well-resourced institutions.

“If our data team rang up FE colleges and said, did you enjoy writing your APP, they will laugh in your face! We know from an independent review of small providers that they found the process demanding, and didn’t have the scale internally to do the analysis.”

So a single regulatory framework, which included both FE and HE providers, has been “great, in that everyone knows what they’re getting [...] but I think we now have to do the work to bring the small and specialist providers, including the FE sector, to a place where the quality of their contribution is recognised, but also they can be held accountable in a way that makes sense.”

It will be a largely welcome reassurance for the FE sector, not being lumped in with the HE sector. Blake continues: “We have to work out a way of allowing that contribution to the system without overwhelming [FE] with bureaucracy, so they either give up, or [...] give us data that’s unreliable.”

Then Blake says: “I’ve outlined my big priorities for my time here, one of which is improving relationships and partnerships between schools and HE, and FE colleges are a really crucial

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bridge there, but by definition, they also have less capacity.”

Hmmm. The feedback to the OfS notwithstanding, I do keep thinking that many heavyweight, multi-million-pound college groups have extremely well-oiled bid-writing teams and experienced back office staff who are very familiar with this kind of ‘bureaucracy’. Meanwhile, some already do significant capacity-building work supporting schools: several colleges leaders, for instance, also run successful academy trusts, and at least one chief executive runs a huge group encompassing a university, colleges and schools.

Is Blake possibly underestimating, or over-worrying about, the capacity of some FE providers? He explains it’s about “building the right framework to allow everyone to participate in their strongest capacity”.

Sounds good. So are FE providers invited to an event the OfS will be hosting ‘with schools and HE leaders’ on April 7?

“They would be, but it’s one of those examples... it’s how do we use their time best. Yes they are welcome, but I think we have more examples of schools and university partnerships. There are example there of what’s already working that could be followed up and scaled up.”

This doesn’t quite make sense, because the FE sector has extremely tight partnerships with local universities in many cases, which could be a model to schools of how to do such partnerships. It’s hard to shake the feeling Blake is more focused on schools, mainly because he is so much more experienced in them.

Blake does, of course, make the very fair point that it’s about engaging students earlier than 16 years old. But many learners only start seriously thinking about their future aged 16, and given the high proportion of disadvantaged learners in FE, the sector is perhaps exactly where partnerships with selective universities should be encouraged. And what about HE for adults? The DfE keeps banging on about lifelong learning, after all.

However, Blake’s great winning quality is quickly reflecting on any assumptions he might be making, and not taking himself as gospel. He acknowledges that his information on FE might not be up to speed.

“We mustn’t overwhelm FE with bureaucracy”

“I’d be delighted if people emailed me, and said, there are 90 amazing things that are happening [in FE]. It feels to me, we don’t have that depth of knowledge about what those partnerships look like.”

Our other big topic of conversation is, of course, that the DfE is consulting on new minimum eligibility thresholds of two ‘E’s at A-level, or at least a grade 4 in English and maths GCSE, in order for people to access student finance. This is supposedly so students “aren’t being pushed into higher education before they are ready”, and has prompted the Association of Colleges to warn that the proposal is a terrible idea, not least for adult learners, many of whom don’t arrive with the right suite of GCSEs.

Blake has already defended the consultation elsewhere in the media, and does so again. “For what it’s worth, I think the government is genuine in its consultation about this,” he says, adding that rather than getting bogged down in the exact detail, it’s



about looking at “levels of preparedness” for HE: “I think the challenge is a good one.” He does well at communicating ideas a little more flexibly than the DfE manages to.

As we round up, I do wonder whether the educators formed in the fire of the Gove years, like Blake, haven’t yet switched on completely to the skills and FE focus which has characterised the DfE more recently. For instance, Blake says FE has “become the repository of all the stuff that isn’t sexy enough,” and worries the country doesn’t often enough tell the “really important story of the kid who didn’t have a great school, got into a really solid FE college, and got really good skills for work, and got a decent job”. But that is arguably the exact narrative that has been picking up speed for some time.

So as HE provision undergoes this shake-up, it would be best not to leave FE out in the cold. To be fair to Blake, he does round up on this note.

“We need to understand from the FE sector what they will be looking for from us. It will never be the system they love – no one loves regulation. But I think we can get closer to the system that allows them to be seen and allows them to contribute.”

Well, FE? Get emailing!



Blake and his brother as children

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Advertorial

ASSESSMENT INNOVATION: HOW CAN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN ONLINE LEARNING SUPPORT EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT?

By Dean Blewitt, Learning Innovation Manager at NCFE

The disruption of traditional methods of teaching and learning has led to a focus on how digital technology such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) can better support learners academically, emotionally and socially. Although there is still a considerable amount of work in developing, testing and ensuring suitability, the future is extremely exciting.

Here at NCFE, our Assessment Innovation Team is seeing large scale piloting and adoption of new digital technology in ways that better meet the needs of learners and educators today. Colleges, training providers and EdTech organisations that are planning to further develop these approaches are being invited to apply to our [Assessment Innovation Fund](#), which is now in its third funding window.

NCFE's vision for the fund is to break the boundaries of assessment within education and promote innovation that creates robust and reliable assessment, within an intelligent education eco-system.

In my role as Learning Innovation Manager, I've been spending time immersed in the latest assessment innovations and truly believe that AI in online learning has a crucial role to play in learners' emotional and social development for several reasons.

In reacting to COVID-19, the priority for education providers was ensuring face-to-face learning and assessment activities were transitioned to an online environment ([Hill, 2020](#)). In doing so, practitioners may have lacked the capacity to consider the implications an online environment might have

on the emotional and social development of learners ([Heitz, Laboissiere, Sanghvi, & Sarakatsannis, 2020](#)). As a school governor, I found that whilst some learners thrived under the remote circumstances, many struggled to adapt.

So, as we work towards a future where AI is commonplace, how can we use it to support learners academically, emotionally, and socially? One solution could be providing online assessment feedback via AI.

Feedback is well-evidenced as one of the most efficient and cost-effective methods of supporting learning outcomes – however, it is important to note that feedback is most effective when coming from the learner's teacher or practitioner ([EEF, 2021](#)). Written or typed text is one of the more efficient ways to provide feedback and is the preferred method when using digital technology, but research suggests that online students feel more supported and motivated when feedback is via personalised video recordings ([Mahoney, Macfarlane, & Ajjawi, 2019](#)).

Although personalised video feedback can benefit learners, my own experience tells me that it can be difficult to capture. Balancing personalised videos with planning lessons, delivery, intervention, tracking progress and the other duties, it's easy to understand why written feedback is

preferred.

However, with the advancement of both [AI avatars](#) and Natural Language Processing, it's feasible to picture a future where the formative and summative assessment process is largely automated – meaning that assessments could be auto marked by AI, with tutors supplementing and personalising the AI feedback which is generated.

Once generated, tutors could submit feedback as text where suitable for accuracy, or as an AI avatar, which converts feedback text to a video message, in any language. The AI avatar presents as a digital version of the learner's tutor, allowing the learner to retain a personal connection with the tutor and still feel supported and motivated ([Mahoney, Macfarlane, & Ajjawi, 2019](#)).

This development could support learners' emotional and social development by supplementing areas where digital text is inadequate. For example, tone of voice, facial expressions and body language. The learner would be able to receive regular feedback and support that is comparable to the classroom.

It's new ideas like this that are needed to create a system that is transformational for learners in technical and vocational education. We're looking forward to continuing to support the sector in making innovative progress and we hope our Assessment Innovation Fund acts as a catalyst for change by providing evidence-based, alternative assessment solutions.

Find out more about [NCFE's Assessment Innovation Fund and how to apply](#).

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- Assist Academy Managers and Product Designers

with the design and development of new high-quality programs that meet customer demands

- Have overall responsibility for the maintenance and continued enhancement of all programme curriculum, both accredited and non-accredited
- Lead Academy Managers to monitor learner data ensuring timely and overall success is above national benchmarks, and delivery meets and exceeds contractual requirements.
- Working with the Quality Directorate, manage the overall continuous improvement and quality of effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment practices, ensuring that apprenticeships are fully embedded into the quality cycle
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THE STAFF ROOM

Dispatches from the frontline of FE

Focus on vocabulary, and you drive attainment across the board

Staff can prevent ESOL learners from staying an extra year if they get targeted vocabulary interventions early, writes Saqib Brook

Vocabulary and attainment are tightly linked in education. We know this – the research proves it. As far back as 1995, Hart and Risley showed that the size of learner vocabulary related to their academic success.

At my college, like at many others, we have plenty of students from overseas, including from Syria, Hong Kong and Afghanistan. Soon, we also expect to welcome students from Ukraine. For many of these students, English is not always their second language but sometimes their third or fourth.

Understandably, many students have good skills in maths and science, but their English needs improving. This includes understanding basic vocabulary, but also idioms. For instance, they might think someone literally means it when they say “I’ve got butterflies in my stomach”.

But there is also a culture gap. Some students come from classrooms where they haven’t been encouraged to discuss and debate. Without the right vocabulary, they are even less confident about doing this.

All this causes real problems for students in terms of attainment. They may get good A-levels, but if they do not make their GCSE English grade, they will be prevented from further study.



SAQIB BROOK

Programme leader
for full-time GCSEs,
Trafford College

For more competitive courses at university, such as medicine, they will need a grade 6 in English GCSE.

So I set up a project to improve the literacy of our students who are English speakers of other languages (ESOL). About 85 of our 150 learners are ESOL.

I started the project in September by delivering four staff development sessions on literacy attainment effectiveness.

“Encourage students to read academic subscription magazines”

We did an initial literacy assessment of the students in September, another in January, and we obtained student feedback. These showed we were closing the gap in literacy attainment and that students felt more confident. This improvement also translated into the sciences, where students need a good flow of language to answer six-mark questions, for example.

So how can you do it? Alongside

more targeted teaching, consider what material to give students to read. Teen fiction does not offer the academic vocabulary needed for high-level GCSE and A-level.

You can also encourage students to read academic subscription magazines. These can be extension activities and provide a more rewarding alternative to ‘extra work’. With online platforms such as Teams, you can also link to subject-specific literature databases in channels.

Use vocabulary books and give students ownership of how they utilise these – some may wish to section alphabetically, while others may prefer to categorise by topic and use pictures.

Exposure to subject-specific vocabulary can be done through low-stakes assessment, such as quizzes ahead of an essay.

In my science lessons, my students keep a list of command words (explain, suggest, describe, etc) on file, and they look up their meaning before attempting a question in an

exam. Eventually, students can be weaned off this support.

It is important to not overkill the errors made by ESOL students, as this will only demotivate them. Instead, ask them to proofread their work and identify their errors.

Develop oracy through discussion, and teach active listening skills, such as finding key information in a podcast.

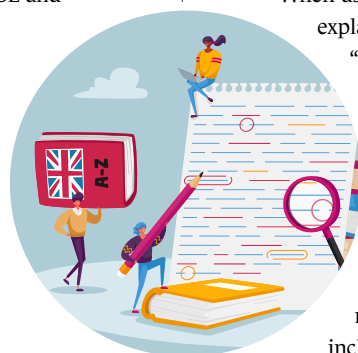
When using idioms, do explain them, so that “taking a rain check” is not taken literally. Most importantly, get their names right! This will convey respect and inclusion. If you can pronounce Tchaikovsky,

you can also pronounce Abdulrahman.

Also, make sure staff are onboard. Get staff feedback early on, so any issues around workload can be resolved.

I’m delighted about how this has helped. One of our students from Hong Kong, for example, was doing very well in maths but was going to have to spend an extra year at college to get their English. Because of this project, they don’t have to stay another year but can move on to their next steps.

Vocabulary is so important. It should be a core part of our teaching – ESOL students particularly, but for all students.



Opinion

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Let's have a new era of skills devolution to local leaders



JULES PIPE

Deputy mayor for planning, regeneration and skills, City Hall

Being given responsibility for the AEB has allowed City Hall to drive an increase in Londoners retraining, writes Jules Pipe

The mayor's delivery of London's adult education budget shows how a locally driven approach can lead the way in supporting more people to get the skills they need to support the UK's recovery.

The government's levelling up white paper has set out a new mission to boost high-quality skills provision across the country, and we know adult training can make a real difference to people's lives.

Since taking over responsibility for the AEB in 2019, City Hall has enabled over 400,000 Londoners to gain new skills, with nearly 200,000 supported in the last academic year alone.

The pandemic hit employment and incomes in London particularly hard. Having responsibility for the AEB allowed us to take steps to address the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on our city. For example, we improved access to AEB-funded level 3 qualifications so people with existing qualifications, who would otherwise be prevented from training, are now able to re-skill.

This led to a 45 per cent increase in Londoners retraining in different industries and occupations, improving their chances of finding or progressing in good jobs. We were able to do this quickly and in advance of similar changes government is making nationally.

Next academic year we will be extending our offer and funding even more level 3 places through the national skills fund.

We also supported more training for Londoners in low-paid work because we know that the higher levels of qualification lead to higher paid employment for Londoners. This helped almost 20,000 more Londoners access learning last year.

We know that the AEB is targeting Londoners who are most in need of support. Last academic year 69 per cent of learners were women and over half were from black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds.

"The levelling up white paper made the case for a devolution dividend"

City Hall's leadership over skills provision has also enabled us to forge strong relationships with London's adult learning providers – the engines of our skills system. This means we can quickly enact policy changes that respond to local need, such as reinvesting part of our budget to help providers deliver remote and online learning, which has risen greatly across London.

Sadiq Khan has made jobs a priority for his second term in office, and was re-elected with a commitment to champion London's skills sector. Both he



and I want to support more Londoners to get the skills these sectors – and the UK's recovery – needs.

In January we launched a major new approach to skills, once again demonstrating the power of local decision making. This included the £44 million mayor's academies programme (which is supporting Londoners into good work in sectors key to London's recovery) and a new campaign to raise awareness of adult learning opportunities in the capital.

During the launch of these initiatives, I was delighted to meet learners who had benefitted from City Hall-funded training and progressed to get good jobs in London's growing creative, digital and green industries.

I met Shevone, whose story about starting her own hospitality business demonstrates how our funding has helped Londoners impacted by the pandemic to reskill into growing sectors.

I also met Jacy, whose theatrical make-up and hair course helped her "get back on track and regain confidence" after taking time out to look after her family.

Following the publication of the

government's levelling up white paper, we want to see a new era of skills devolution to London and other cities and regions.

The government's approach to delivering programmes, such as skills bootcamps and Multiply, through the Greater London Authority and Mayoral Combined Authorities are steps in the right direction.

However, we want to see local leaders being given more autonomy over skills to support economic recovery in their areas by joining up budgets and providing assurances on funding over multiple years.

Empowering local leaders to shape and align skills and employment provision – including apprenticeships, careers information, advice and guidance, and the skills elements of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund – would allow us to build on the devolution of the AEB to better meet skills needs across the country.

The levelling up white paper made a clear case for a devolution dividend. The path to its delivery must now run through our cities and regions.

Opinion

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Don't solely blame 'the careers system' for low apprenticeship starts


LAURA-JANE RAWLINGS

Chief executive, Youth Employment UK

Many of the issues putting young people off apprenticeships are in the control of employers and providers, not careers advisers, writes Laura-Jane Rawlings

At the Annual Apprenticeship Conference last week, it was interesting to hear claims that the careers education system is still not delivering for apprenticeships.

Frustrating as it is that the conversation has not moved on in the past ten years, we have to sense-check the narratives we are using. The careers system isn't perfect, but it is changing.

Let's explore the role that careers education has in "delivering for apprenticeships". It's a requirement that young people get to hear about all routes available to them.

Young people in education tell us via the Youth Voice Census that they are hearing more about apprenticeships than ever before. In 2021, 86 per cent of young people had apprenticeships discussed with them in school, which is a significant increase on the years before. Anecdotally, more schools are opening their doors again to great in-person activity.

But despite hearing much more about apprenticeships, only 29 per cent of young people aged 14 to 18 were likely to apply for one.

So we need to better understand what sits behind that decision – and much of it is in the hands of providers and employers.

Here are the key factors that are holding young people back:

1. Availability

Only 9.9 per cent of young people think they will find a good-quality job where they live. If you search Find An Apprenticeship in your local area, how many vacancies come up?

Today in Corby, there are 15 higher/degree apprenticeships in a 20-mile radius, for a town with around 400 young people looking for post-18 pathways.

Young people can only look for what's available in their area. Social mobility and disadvantage will mean that young people cannot always afford to travel or feel confident enough to move.

"We have to look at the whole apprenticeship pay structure"

We can provide more apprenticeships and make it easier for SMEs to provide apprenticeships too.

We also have to think about the barriers to apprenticeships. Is there more that providers or employers can do to ensure more affordable travel? Perhaps paying a month in advance, supporting season ticket loans, and thinking creatively about how more young people can



access opportunities outside their local area.

2. Job Descriptions

When you're on Find An Apprenticeship, check out the job descriptions of a random number of vacancies, including the jargon being used, the descriptors and information available.

Job descriptions are most often the first interaction with an employer that a young person has. Most organisations will not change the language, tone or description of a job to meet their target audience when thinking about apprentices. However, this is an organisation's chance to think differently about the requirements it is asking for.

Compare that to a university prospectus, which is solely written with the target audience in mind: they sell the course, content and the wider opportunity too.

3. Person Specifications

Person specifications have the power to very quickly make young people feel as though they are not good enough for a

job. This approach needs to be rethought.

We also need to update our expectations. Young people have had limited to no access to work experience or part-time employment for at least the past two years during Covid. However, many employers are still asking for recent work experience.

4. Salary

While young people are, in the main, willing to accept a reduced salary for quality training, they cannot, and do not, want to work for the minimum rates, particularly where they are doing a real job alongside their training.

This is a contentious issue, but we have to look at the whole apprentice pay structure.

These areas I have mentioned here are just the tip of what we know from young people, through the Youth Voice Census. There is more we all need to do to level up apprenticeships.

But it is not the sole job of the careers system. In fact, it has no control over the four points I have raised above!

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?

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The skills bill endgame ushers in a new age of paternalism


TOM BEWICK

Chief executive, Federation of Awarding Bodies

The skills bill brings to a head over four decades of state-ist beliefs, writes Tom Bewick

The skills bill has entered the last of its parliamentary stages, known as ‘ping-pong’. This rather cute verb, like the game of table tennis, is an apt way of describing the battle of wills now under way between the elected Commons and the appointed House of Lords.

Considering the government has a majority in the Commons, and the most seats of any one political party in the Lords, the outcome has never been in doubt. Ministers and senior officials will get their way.

But it is worth reflecting perhaps on why the government has endured so many defeats in the upper house. A number of chunky amendments have passed with cross-party support, only to be overturned in the Commons.

When historians come to look at this landmark piece of legislation they may wonder why two towering titans of post-war education reform – Lord Baker (Conservative education secretary, 1986-1989) and Lord Blunkett (Labour education secretary, 1997-2001) – found themselves in such agreement trying to change so many aspects of a fundamentally flawed bill.

From the get-go, ministers have been clear that their desire is to give themselves and related quangos more statutory powers to design, fund, defund and direct technical education

reforms from the centre.

As Baker observed in his speech last week: “At no stage have any government or minister said that a student cannot take two qualifications that are funded and available. This has never happened before in our history, so why is it being done now? The government have never justified this, and it is extraordinary.”

Similarly, despite the introduction of local skills improvement plans, officials in Whitehall will ultimately sign them off.

Amendments were tabled to significantly strengthen the role of elected mayoral authorities, but what we’ve got instead is watered-down devolution.

The same is true of qualifications reform. The view appears to be that colleges, course leaders and learners cannot be trusted to make informed choices.

Students in future will not be able to combine A-levels and T Levels. It seems we’re entering

a new age of paternalism where decisions are best made by the state in the form of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

And don’t believe all the hype about this being some employer-driven skills revolution. It’s nothing of the sort.

“Don’t believe all the hype that this is an employer-led skills revolution”

The parliamentary under-secretary, Alex Burghart, proudly boasts of 250 employers being engaged in the design of these technical education reforms to date. Is he seriously trying to tell us, in a British economy of 5.6 million firms, that a cohort equivalent

to just 0.0045 per cent of all employers is some groundswell example of popular reform?

No, this is a top-down technocratic revolution that brings to a head over four decades of state-ist beliefs that the answer to our relatively poor productivity and skills performance is more bureaucracy. It does not matter if the ministers are Labour or Conservative.

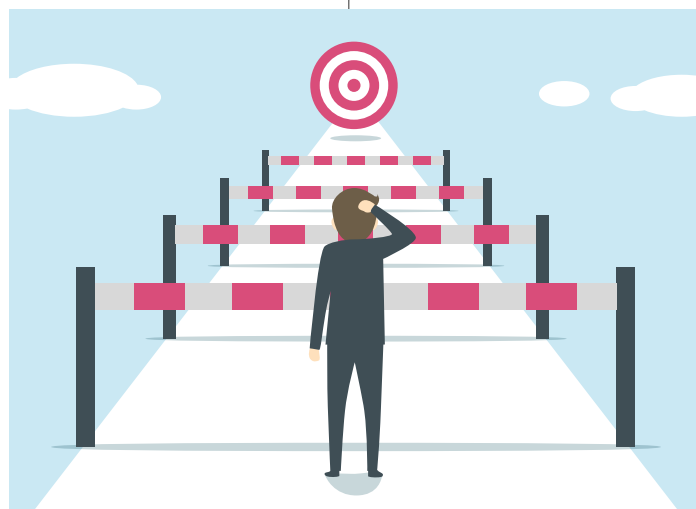
The architect of these reforms, Lord Sainsbury, wrote a book in 2020, praising the authoritarian impulses of the Chinese Communist Party. What more need I say?

Indeed, without any apparent irony about who has been in charge this past decade, chancellor Rishi Sunak recently lamented the UK’s comparative inability to equip adults with vocational technical qualifications, and the fact employers invest about half the European average on workplace training.

Of course, the government would say the post-16 skills and education bill is the answer. Instead we will end up with an imperfect law that future generations will be able to build on.

For instance, the genie is out of the bottle on the lifetime skills guarantee. It’s only a matter of time before we see a statutory right to lifelong learning.

As in all great parliamentary and policy battles, the committed among us will live on to fight another day.



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READERS REPLY

Eton: 'elite' sixth-form plans impossible without our £1m top-up

A big thank you to Eton for highlighting so clearly the shocking fact that state-funded sixth-form provision is so underfunded. If Eton can only deliver high-quality education with an extra £2,000 per student, that tells us two things. One: the fact that so many state-funded colleges deliver such excellent results year after year on such poor funding is truly remarkable and heroic. Two: this policy will further entrench inequality rather than levelling anything up.

Andy Forbes, website

Marine specialist takes aim at Ofsted after grade 4 report

I can see why this and other providers get upset about the lack of vocational skills set of the inspectors carrying out their evaluation, especially when seeing that one of my old colleagues, who has the perfect background and qualifications, was inspecting elsewhere in the same week. However, the main findings of the report seem pretty clear as to why the grades were arrived at. Having had a previous monitoring visit that pointed out deficiencies, the current regime of inspection gives providers time to put things right. So two things – firstly, Ofsted should try and have someone with vocational expertise on the inspection of a specialist provider (they do not seem to be giving this any consideration in their planning), and secondly, new providers act on the findings of monitoring visits, so that you put areas for improvement right.

Phil Hatton, website

Why doesn't Eton offer its 'transformative support' to all colleges in Dudley, Middlesbrough and Oldham?

I wholeheartedly agree with everything Tom says in this article. This is not the way to level up opportunities for the vast majority of young people. 16-19 funding needs to be urgently addressed.

Linda Rose, website

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Eton: 'elite' sixth-form plans impossible without our £1m top-up



Thus proving that the issue is not that the state sector is in need of some mysterious expertise supposedly possessed by educators of the privileged, but rather one of chronic underfunding. So how about ending ridiculous gimmicks like this, removing private schools' charitable status, and using the tax income to help fund state education properly?

Richard Heath, website

Apprenticeship reform starts with the school calendar

The perceived gap in parity of esteem between apprenticeships and university would be better handled by educating young people and parents about the lifelong impact of student debt. Students graduating in England in 2021 left with an average of £45,000 of debt, and interest rates are pegged to inflation. The decision of which path to choose should be making itself. Perhaps the answer actually lies in schools equipping young people with better mathematical skills and financial awareness. I can't see that requiring employers to fit their hiring choices and timing around the school calendar is going to achieve much!

Anon, website

Bulletin

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Jenny Craig

Principal & CEO,
Buckinghamshire
College Group

Start date: July 2022

Previous Job: Deputy Principal, Abingdon & Witney College

Interesting fact: Jenny won the West Yorkshire cycling proficiency championship when she was just 11 years old



Rebecca Gater

Principal & CEO,
Solihull College and
University Centre

Start date: September 2022

Previous Job: Vice Principal - Curriculum & Quality, Solihull College and University Centre

Interesting fact: Rebecca's first part time job was in a pizza shop where she would sometimes have to deliver pizzas in a bright yellow Nova with a giant, illuminated phone handset on the top

Movers & Shakers

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



Neil Morrison

Board Member,
Institute for
Apprenticeships and
Technical Education

Start date: April 2022

Concurrent Job: Director of HR and Communications, Severn Trent

Interesting fact: Neil started working life as an FE lecturer at the Isle of Wight College and has completed three full ultramarathons and the three peaks 24 hour challenge



Sir Peter Estlin

Board Member,
Institute for
Apprenticeships and
Technical Education

Start date: April 2022

Concurrent Job: Chair of FutureDotNow

Interesting fact: At 17, Peter asked the then Lord Mayor of the City of London "How does one get your job?" Forty years later, Peter became the 691st Lord Mayor of the City of London.

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