

Latest apprenticeship policy slammed

FE Week Exclusive

Nick Summers

@SummersNicholas

The Shadow Minister for Further Education and Skills, Gordon Marsden, has hit out at a Government policy designed to cut the data returns and audit requirements needed to deliver apprenticeships.

Gordon Marsden spoke exclusively to *FE Week* and said: "The Government can talk about cutting red tape all they like.

"Any actions the Government takes to reduce red tape must also ensure the quality and reputation of apprenticeships is not compromised."

The comments follow a package of new measures issued by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) last week, which plans to introduce reductions in 'red tape' and a 'payment by outcomes' approach to apprenticeship funding for large employers.

Marsden went on to say: "This is particularly important as more and more data comes to light, which raises real questions about the status of some of the large number of short-term apprenticeships."

FE Week first highlighted the rise of short 12 week apprenticeship programmes on the front cover of the June 13 pilot edition.

National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) and Skills Funding Agency published a statement last week acknowledging concerns about the rapid surge of apprenticeships and the quality of training being



provided.

The NAS statement said: "(We) will work with the Skills Funding Agency and look critically at apprenticeships delivered in a condensed way."

Marsden added there should be increased vigilance from Ministers, the NAS, Officials and the Skills Funding Agency.

He said: "They must ensure the status of apprenticeships as a key part of any growth policy is not undermined by the short term pursuit of over inflated targets."

Professor Alison Wolf, advisor to the Government on 14-19 vocational education, has also expressed her

concerns about the policy: "Striking a balance between accountability and stifling bureaucracy is always hard.

"The people who have a real stake in the quality of education and training are the recipients; and so it is especially difficult to maintain quality when they are not the ones who actually choose or purchase their programme.

"This government recognised this when it abolished Train to Gain, but it needs to be aware that any programme which combines government purchases with quantitative outcome targets has built in problems of this sort."



Nick Linford, Managing Editor of *FE Week* visited Downing Street to discuss apprenticeship policies

12 week apprentices story on page 2

Government to review effectiveness of Institute for Learning

Nick Reinis

@fenickr

The government is to hold an independent review into workforce professionalisation including the effectiveness of the Institute for Learning (IfL).

John Hayes MP, minister for education, skills and lifelong learning, said the review would look at arrangements to achieve a professionalised workforce in further education including the role played by IfL.

It comes after the IfL had sought to introduce a fee for its membership, which is compulsory for teachers in

adult and further education.

However, University and College Union (UCU) members voted in the summer overwhelmingly to stop paying fees to the IfL, which the union believes is currently 'not fit for purpose'.

In response to the announcement of the review, the UCU has now "suspended" its legal threat to the IfL.

Mr Hayes said: "I am pleased to hear... a basis has been proposed on which constructive discussions can be resumed and legal action suspended, and I want to do all that I can to help find a solution that is in the best, longer term interests of those who are

served by the sector and those in it.

"I am happy to confirm my willingness to commission an independent review that would look broadly at the arrangements for achieving a professionalised workforce."

He added: "My aim would be to commission this review as soon as possible. However, in order to go ahead, I am asking that all parties now refrain from further action.

"Once that is confirmed, my officials can facilitate a further discussion on the terms of reference for an independent review."

UCU has welcomed the decision

saying it was essential the review "did not shy away from asking awkward questions" and it heard directly from staff teaching in colleges.

UCU general secretary Sally Hunt said: "We are pleased the government has agreed to commission an independent review.

"As the result from our recent ballot made abundantly clear, the current arrangements are simply not up to scratch."

IfL's chief executive, Toni Fazaeli, said: "We look forward to working with all the parties involved to establish the terms of reference for this broad inquiry."

Visit feweek.co.uk for the full story.

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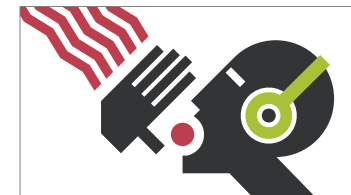
LSIS Chair profile



Dame Ruth Silver reminds the politicians they are not Peter Pan

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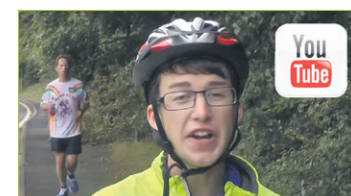
FE Week agitator



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City & Guilds allocated more than £8m for 25,000 Asda apprentices

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) has allocated more than £8m to City & Guilds in order to deliver 25,000 apprenticeships at Asda.

The funding will be used to train employees from May 2011 to July 2012, comprising of £736,824 until the end of July 2011 with a further £7.7m between August 2011 and the end of July 2012.

A spokesperson from the SFA said: "The Skills Funding Agency is contracted with City & Guilds for Business, a wholly owned subsidiary of the awarding body City & Guilds."

As previously reported in *FE Week*, this new allocation is similar to the contract between Elmfield Training and Morrisons.

The Morrisons partnership has already created more than 20,000 Level 2 Retail apprenticeships starts, specifically for those aged 25 and over.

FE Week understands Asda is not paying City & Guilds any money for the scheme, but is instead investing "time awarded to colleagues in store."

John Hayes, Minister for FE, recently announced the government has smashed their apprenticeship recruitment target for the financial year ending March 2011.

Asda said they will create 6,000 apprentices by the end of this year and

25,000 by the end of 2012 under the Asda Skills Academy.

The supermarket chain has been offering employees Level 2, Level 3 and Level 4 qualifications from June 6.

Sarah Dickins, people operations and policy director at Asda, said: "This is something that our colleagues have been asking for. Getting that qualification is really important to them, as it builds up their education as well as improving their skills in the workplace."

The training is being provided by City & Guilds for Business, a City & Guilds approved Centre which has worked in the past with companies such as Tesco, McDonalds and British Airways.

Lisa Burnett, People Development Manager at Asda plc said: "City & Guilds is well known in Asda so our pilot training scheme gained instant credibility."

Simon Witts, Director of City & Guilds for Business added: "The Asda Skills Academy is an exciting expansion of our existing relationship and offers us a new model for working with employers in future."

"It also puts us well on the way to achieving Million Extra – our commitment to help create one million new apprenticeships by the

summer of 2013."

The SFA hopes that their additional investment in apprenticeships will support learners aged between 19 and 24, rather than older or existing employees.

An update posted in August on the SFA website reads: "We would hope that employers and providers do not move this extra resource into significantly expanding their Intermediate Apprenticeships (Level 2) for 25-year-olds and over."

City & Guilds is not the first awarding body to take on the role of both training and certification.

An Ofqual spokesperson said: "In circumstances where the awarding organisation is also acting as training provider, they will be required to have in place arrangements to manage any possible conflicts of interest."

"Breaches of the conditions can result in regulatory action."

Asda spokeswoman Tori Pourzand added: "The priority for us is the quality of learning for the individual, not the speed of it; however, we anticipate colleagues will complete the programme between 9 and 12 months."

Existing employees are currently being signed up to the scheme, and new employees can join after completing a 12 week training programme.

12 week apprenticeships still advertised



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Despite increased criticism in what the Chief Executive of the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) called 'hot-housing', many short NVQ and apprenticeship programmes are still being advertised.

In June *FE Week* reported on the rise of 12 week apprentices, and referred to the call centre training provider Synapse. Since then the Synapse website simply states: "Synapse is no longer recruiting apprentices", but short programmes continue to be advertised by others.

The Security Training School Limited, a subcontractor to Leeds and Newham Colleges and Durham University, advertise two day fully funded NVQs as well as 12 week apprenticeships (see picture).

Lord Grove, Managing Director at The Security Training School said: "I believe that concerns regarding the duration of apprentices courses are in many cases well founded, but each circumstance should be assessed fairly on its own merits."

"Technical apprentice courses involving trades are far more in-depth and require greater study, than the spectator safety courses we run for example, but that is reflected in the weighting of funding involved."

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FE Week investigates

Ex-staff speak out on the demise of Ethical Skills and Training Ltd

There was disbelief at Ethical Skills and Training Ltd (EST) this summer when the company - a major subcontractor for The Intraining Group (Intraining), which is owned by NCG (formerly Newcastle College Group) one of the largest FE organisations in the country - suddenly went into administration, leaving 133 staff out of a job and many apprentices facing uncertainty.

At the time, the reasons for the demise of EST, which specialises in apprenticeships serving the fitness industry, were unclear. One month on, an investigation carried out by *FE Week* has uncovered more information about what went wrong.

Two former employees, who asked not to be named, claim EST hired inexperienced, underqualified staff to carry out assessments, verify trainees' portfolios and even carry out health and safety inspections of employer premises. "When assessors checked them (the apprentices) out, they just ticked the boxes and said everything was fine. But it wasn't. Some learners didn't do all the tests they had to do. When Intraining asked for evidence, we didn't have any," claims one former employee, who also wishes to remain unnamed.

This was symptomatic of more widespread chaos and confusion, former EST staff have told *FE Week*. There was no "diary system, no monitoring system, and no system of random internal verifier visits" and no one checking if assessors were actually visiting learners in their workplaces.

And key performance indicators for apprentices' achievements - vital for assessing their progress - were only introduced in the second week of June after Elaine Barrett and Jan de Vos, the Directors at EST, became "clearly aware of just how badly things had slipped," one ex-employee claims.

Former staff also claim strategies changed on a daily basis. "We were told to promote apprenticeships that we couldn't deliver, such as catering and hairdressing," says one. "People were reprimanded if they didn't meet internal targets, when we physically weren't able to deliver those apprenticeships."

Barrett claims the problems started back in May, when Intraining started pressing EST into hurrying trainees through their apprenticeship programmes in six months. She was unwilling to do this, she says, because many of them were NEET - young people not in employment or training. "I said that we weren't going to rush young people - we're anti-the sausage-machine approach." Phil Bonell, Intraining's managing director advised us that "Intraining was fully expecting agreed significant learner completions to start coming through and was alarmed that the volumes of completions were simply not coming through".

But when Barrett and EST finance director Richard Taylor, met Intraining in Sheffield on June 13 they refused to sanction EST's monthly payment, she claims. "At that point the invoice was £675,000. I told him we would go into liquidation - Intraining knew the importance of us being paid promptly. They were offering to pay us within six weeks rather than a month, but that would have meant we were trading insolvently. We were at their mercy. We went to our lawyer,

who said we could not be seen to be trading insolvently." Around this time, a former employee claims, 'boot camps' were set up at a gym in Kensington, West London in a last ditch attempt to get trainees through apprenticeships. Any learner who attended one of these 'boot camps' (which ran from the third week of June until the EST entered administration on July 5) was given an iPod and "put through Key Skills exams with no preparation...then 'assessed' for the NVQ part of their apprenticeship, all in one day."

Barrett claims Intraining did not provide enough support to justify the 15 per cent fee it charged for managing the £1.7m contract from the Skills Funding Agency and sub-contracted to EST starting in January of this year. "They were supposed to provide us with all sorts of services but did nothing," she says.

However *FE Week* has learned Chartstage, a similar training company set up in 2006 by Elaine Barrett (who was at that time going under the name of Elaine King) was liquidated in 2009 and dissolved in February 2011. Chartstage also specialised in apprenticeships for the sports and fitness industry. Croydon College confirmed it worked with Chartstage, but declined to comment further.

Bonell says the company was vigilant when entering into a contract with EST. "We entered into a subcontract with EST in January 2011 following a significant due diligence exercise. The contract value was £1.7 million and the obligations of EST were clear and precise. Intraining reviewed the existing systems in place and made recommendations for improvement along with the sharing of key Intraining process documents and associated paperwork."

FE Week has shown evidence of Chartstage's failure to Intraining, but they declined to comment further.

Bonell denies the claims that Intraining was 'top-slicing' a lot of money for doing very little. He claims the management fee funded 'a dedicated back office function' to manage administration and compliance.

"We supported the collation and retention of all evidence required for funding purposes," he says. "Contract and quality review meetings were held with EST on a regular basis. Various EST staff attended training sessions at the Intraining head office in Sheffield. Intraining staff attended meetings at the EST's head office with EST senior management to discuss quality and compliance."

Bonell says payments were withheld from EST, but says there were good reasons for this. Intraining "was fully expecting significant learner completions to start coming through" and was "alarmed" when they didn't, he says. "Consequently, given the magnitude of the sums involved, a decision was taken to require full evidence of learner progression before releasing further payments."

EST's difficulties are down to it being "an under-capitalised business," he says. "As the sole customer of EST, we were under constant pressure to try and release payments outside the contractual due dates to ease cashflow pressure."

Although Barrett spoke to *FE Week* about Intraining, further attempts to contact her by phone and email have proved fruitless.

Before EST there was Chartstage Training

The owner of EST had previously been involved in running another company, Chartstage Training & Development, which folded under similar circumstances in 2007.

The company was set up by Elaine King and others as a training provider and initially delivered their own qualification, the Certificate in Community Support Work.

Maggie Blagrove, a former employee of Chartstage Training & Development, spoke with *FE Week* via the online application, Skype.

"Only two of the teachers at Chartstage Training & Development were said to be adequately qualified; the rest were still working towards formal qualifications."

Maggie went on to explain how the company was quickly overwhelmed by the size of the contract given by Croydon College and was unable to meet their targets.

"Elaine constantly talked about an exit strategy. I remember right from the start, she was saying how they were going to make loads of money and how they were going to walk away from it."

Maggie is concerned that Elaine's recent failure at EST shows that she hasn't learnt from her previous mistakes.

She said: "I think this is wrong, and it shouldn't be allowed to happen again. It has a huge impact on learners."

"She needs to know that she has to be responsible, and that she's let down an awful lot of young people - which is unacceptable."

"As an industry we shouldn't be letting this happen. It should be regulated and there should be closer monitoring by the colleges. There must be some kind of standardisation to stop this from happening."



"I remember right from the start, they were saying how they were going to make loads of money and how they were going to walk away from it."

She said: "It all started going wrong when we went into apprenticeships as a subcontractor to Richard Huish College and Croydon College in early 2008. Nobody at the top level was qualified to guide apprentices through that process, or to guide staff in requirements."

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FE Week profile

Dame Ruth Silver ~ her story

Janet Murray

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Chair of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service talks to *FE Week*

“I told them to get lost a thousand times,” says Dame Ruth Silver, of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) of which she is now chair. Having announced her impending retirement from Lewisham College, she was intending to “have a break and not do anything,” and certainly wasn’t looking for another big challenge.

But despite her outward protests, the idea of heading up the sector-led improvement body, was starting to get under her skin. After a lot of persuasion, she put in an application. “What came across was the sincerity of having a sector owned, sector led body, like a trade union, using the sector to improve itself. And the more I thought about it, the more I thought it would be fabulous.”

She admits her interview technique was unconventional. “I said ‘I don’t really want this job but I don’t know how I can walk away with it because it matches with my beliefs, but I would love it if you didn’t appoint me.’” She got the job and has been an enthusiastic chair of the LSIS board since March 2008.

Unorthodoxy is a recurring theme in Silver’s 30 year career in the sector, which has included child guidance, teaching and inspection and even a spell in the civil service. There was no grand plan, she says and she certainly didn’t set out to be a college principal, which “just kind of happened, naturally.”

Her trademark red curls, bold wardrobe and obsession with rosemary oil (she bought it in bulk from Neal’s Yard and sprinkled it in all the classrooms at Lewisham College during exam times) has always set her apart from the men in grey suits, as has her positivity and absolute refusal to whinge about the sector.

The whole of her career, she says, “was a training ground for Lewisham” where she was principal for 17 years, and brought the college (formerly known as the South East London Technical College) out of the doldrums into an outstanding beacon college. Silver says she owes a lot of her success to her upbringing in close knit mining community in Lanarkshire, Western Scotland where “every house had an auntie or an uncle or a cousin in it and everyone looked after everyone else’s children.”

Born prematurely in 1945, weighing just three pounds, Silver spent the first months of her life in an incubator and was “mollycoddled” by the rest of her family. But despite ongoing problems with her eyesight, due to her prematurity, she was always “a clever wee thing” and the year she left primary education, was the only child in the village to pass the 11 plus and go to grammar school.

Her father’s ill health (he suffered from kidney problems throughout her childhood) meant the family wasn’t well off and everyone in the village

chipped in to help her on her way. “Someone got me the badge for my blazer, someone got me the tie...I felt kitted out by the whole village and there was no way I failed an exam after that,” she recalls.

And when her father died, when she was 15, “the whole community wrapped itself around the family,” including the local branch of the National Union of Mineworkers who knocked on her door and promised help with her education. “I went off to Glasgow University to read literature and psychology funded by the NUM, which made me the richest kid in Glasgow. I had no soles in my shoes until I went there, but suddenly I had all this money for books and things.”

So when Silver was awarded a CBE in 2006, she had a strong sense that the achievement wasn’t hers alone. “I went out to John Lewis and bought ribbon in the same colour as my medal and sat for weeks and weeks attaching ribbon to cards that said ‘this is your share of my CBE.’ I think I sent out 400 cards in the end. I sent it my mum’s neighbour, the trade union...everyone who had helped in some way.”

As a child, she wanted to be a hospital social worker, or almoner as it was then called, even though her teachers thought she should go to drama school. “I liked the way they - hospital almoners - intervened, the way they made things happen for people. Somehow that spoke to me.”

After postgraduate studies at Southampton University and the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations in Adolescence and Transition in London, Silver ended up working in child guidance.

Throughout her career she has tried to recreate that sense of community she felt in her own childhood and one of the things she is most proud of at Lewisham is setting up a special access fund so “my ballet dancers had shoes and my construction lads had Stanley measures.”

She identifies strongly with her Scottish heritage, repeatedly referring to herself as a “tough old Scot” - something she feels prepared her well for the challenges of leadership, which she admits, can often involve disagreement and compromise. “I think you always have to remember that when the folk you are fighting with are within (the college), you are actually fighting for something you believe in.”

One of toughest times of her career was when she joined Newham College as vice-principal in the late 1980s. Six weeks into the job, having spent years as a women’s rights campaigner giving speeches warning women against the dangers of giving up their career and being forced into housewifery, she found out she was pregnant. “I used to say ‘don’t have babies, they ruin your life and your body’ and all that stuff,” she laughs. “And of course when I became a mammy I was over the moon, it was the best thing I have done.”

But she admits it was tough. Her partner, a writer and actor was able to take the lead on childcare, but she remembers crying on the bus on the way to and from work because she was missing her daughter so much. There were other difficult times, not least when Private Eye ran a series of articles on her, claiming she was splashing out on posh lunches and employing a driver - out of the college budget. The lunches



Picture: Nick Linford for FE Week

were actually charity fundraisers, and the driver, Silver maintains, was paid out of her own pocket after she was attacked on her way home one evening after a governors’ meeting. “My daughter was about eight at the time and I remember going home and thinking ‘what would happen if she lost me?’ I went in the next day and resigned. The chair of governors said ‘well the college can pick you up now and drop you off.’ And I paid the home to work cost of that - that was Herbie’s (the member of security staff who became her driver) as well as the petrol and stuff.”

“They’re not bloody Peter Pan, they’re politicians”

Silver has spent the last year “in mourning for what the FE sector nearly became.” Widening participation, the expansion of higher education in FE colleges, the EMA have been replaced by a “sleeker world where there are many more freedoms.” But things are looking up, she says. “It has taken me a year to stop feeling sad about what we could have become, what we nearly became, and to get a sense of what we can become now - and I am really quite excited again. I mean, the last decade was wonderful but all we did was deliver qualifications and we have some space now to do more than that. You can see that.

“Some colleges are forming themselves into mutuals and trusts. So the seeds of that reformulation are now beginning to emerge, I think.”

But politicians are still missing the point when it comes to education, she says. “Every Secretary of State I have ever worked with - and I’ve worked with them all - tries to recreate their childhood educational experience. John Major was saying that the kids need to go and get a job and to get them ready in school to do that. David Blunkett said ‘bring back apprenticeships’. Charles Clarke said ‘bring back uniforms’, Estelle Morris said ‘bring back mixed ability teaching’, Ruth Kelly said ‘keep A-levels’, Michael Gove is saying ‘let’s have a philosophical core’. And they do it because actually, that’s what was good for them. It’s not an imperious imposition, it is a genuine belief. But it’s not a simple question of recreating your own childhood. They’re not bloody Peter Pans, they’re politicians.”

Silver says she has no imminent plans to retire but is aware that LSIS could well be her “final innovation of respect to a lifetime in FE.” While there are “books to write and galleries to see” for now she is happy to continue, alongside her LSIS job, with some of her other roles, which include chairing the taskforce on the future of the careers profession for the government, co-chairing the Skills Commission in the House of Commons with Barry Shearman and being on Jamie Oliver Foundation board “which is great fun, because he’s free from all political and funding imperatives so it’s down to learning.” Now 66, she has recently had laser surgery on her eyes, which she says, has given her a new lease of life. She is even thinking about learning to drive. Proof, if ever it was needed, that there is life in the “old Scot” yet.

FE Week expert

New Year, New Challenges



The latest bundle of Papers which came out from Government over the summer on FE reform pose more questions than answers, nearly 60 questions in all covering most aspects of the FE system.

Nor are things likely to be clear for some time. We've got an Education and Skills Growth Review under way, consultations going on around both the Wolf proposals and the HE White Paper recommendations and the Chancellor working away on an Autumn Financial Statement.

FE's ability to cope with change is legendary. So what does it need to look out for this time?

Five themes stand out.

First, organisational change, creating what the Minister called 'a rainbow of provision rather than a monotone of grey uniformity.' Opening up the market is a phrase being applied across the education system at present and FE is not immune. Corporations will be variously considering relationships with University Technical Colleges, National Skills Academies and HE over the coming months with some even venturing into college companies and mutual trusts. A lot depends on the local context, but the Government is keen to encourage greater diversity and liberalisation and will publish guidelines on business models later in the year.

"FE's ability to cope with change is legendary, so what does it need to look out for?"

Second, provision in key areas. For 14-19 year olds, Wolf has set new demands on 16-19 programmes and opened up mobility between schools and colleges. For skills, literacy, numeracy, apprenticeship and level 2 provision remain key along with the demands of the Growth agenda. For adult and community learning, consultation continues but the driver here is the Big Society while for HE, big opportunities will arise partly through new validation arrangements and partly through the 'contestable' places.

Third, teaching and learning and the continuing emphasis on quality, performance and outcomes. Increasingly, colleges are being asked to take control of their own destiny. This means greater reliance on internal performance and data management procedures and less on external mechanisms with responsiveness to learners and communities the critical feature.

Fourth, funding developments and in particular the proposed introduction of a fee loan system for higher level provision. FE has traditionally exercised discretion over fee charging but the loan system when it comes in for the 2013 academic year will see a change in culture with a greater emphasis on pricing, collection and, for learners, returns on investment. As the consultation implies, colleges have a crucial role; not only will they have to manage the system, they'll have to 'sell' it as well.

Fifth, wider structural change with a range of furniture removal going on to give colleges more space to perform. Curtailing intermediary bodies, reducing the streams of funding, removing a number of centrally imposed targets, streamlining the qualification approval process and rationalising local planning arrangements are all part of this.

It's enough to be going on with.

*Steve Besley, Head of Policy at Pearson
Tweeting as @SteveBesley*

@FEweek Guide to #FurtherEd Twitter

FE Week has launched an exclusive 'Guide to Twitter', in partnership with NCFE

The eight page supplement also includes our principal competition, Twitter 'Top Trumps' game and a list of every college Twitter account name (that we could find!)

We'll also be using the hashtag #ESOL2011 to debate the FE Week evidence gathering session at the House of Commons on September 13 between 18.30 and 17.30

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FE Week expert

ESOL funding u-turn?



The Skills Funding Agency confirmed at the end of August that all ESOL learners who are actively seeking work could be eligible for full funding, irrespective of whether they are in receipt of work related benefits or income related benefits.

The clarification is good news indeed and gives ESOL providers the opportunity to use the flexibility the government has granted to support the most disadvantaged and vulnerable of learners. It means that many women who were attending ESOL courses last year can return and progress on to the next level. It means that many refugees who are only in need of English language skills to unlock their skills and enter the job market will get that chance.

“What about those learners in part time or low paid employment, who cannot declare that they are actively seeking work?”

However some questions remain. What about those learners in part time or low paid employment, who cannot declare that they are actively seeking work? Also, how will colleges achieve their fee income targets? If the Skills Funding Agency gives colleges flexibility on fees, and ESOL learners are effectively subsidised by income from other learners' fees, the

providers may lose out in the long term.

We should also be concerned about those learners who heard that fees were going up and have already decided not to return this year. What can providers do? Greenwich Community College is texting and writing to all ex-students to encourage them to return this term and continue language learning. The College is also distributing leaflets and displaying posters with the new information.

Some ESOL providers are also developing a declaration form that learners can sign on enrolment, stating that they are actively seeking work. We know from the Association of Colleges survey conducted in January that 21% of students access employment as a direct result of ESOL courses. So this may well be a confirmation of what exists already.

Overall, the glass is half full rather than half empty. The 55% of ESOL students who have Basic Skills needs in literacy and numeracy, could now be eligible for fully funded ESOL provision, at the provider's discretion. And women with child caring responsibilities who cannot claim Job Seeker's Allowance until their child is 7 years old will also be able to access fully funded language provision. This is good news and something to celebrate as we start the new term.

Chris Taylor is a Programme Director at NIACE leading on a wide range of projects in ESOL, citizenship and community cohesion.

Some reader comments from www.feweek.co.uk

Stella McManus said: “As Chris Taylor states it is a change which can be celebrated especially for women with child caring responsibilities which make up the bulk of our students. However, we don't know what the future holds with regards to funding, so it's even more important to equip our ESOL students with relevant employment and vocational skills to actually enable them to enter the workforce.”

Rob Reynolds said: “We welcome the changes albeit delivered with absurd timing with one week to go before the beginning of term. We had to reduce staffing levels with the expectation of lower student numbers and this now may have been completely unnecessary. I feel sorry for those who lost out and embarrassed that we had to put staff through the stress of potential redundancy. We are now desperately calling and writing to learners to judge whether they satisfy the new criteria so that they can continue their studies. The omission of some kind of support for those on low income is unhelpful.”

Rob Peutrell said: “The change is a testament to the hard work of those who have been campaigning, carrying out local impact research, and lobbying in various ways, in particular the coalition around Action for ESOL.”

If your comment is published you will win an exclusive FE Week mug



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FE Week expert

Red tape cutting too good to be true?



The Bureaucracy Busters, rated PG, coming soon to employers and training providers near you? This is the latest in the Coalition's on-going saga of deregulation and slashing red tape (see front page).

For too long vexatious bureaucracy has held back innovation; Whitehall pen-pushers have strangled professional freedoms and a culture of targets has drowned out creativity.

This week our heroes are BIS Secretary Vince Cable and Skills Minister John Hayes and a package of new measures to make apprenticeships less complicated for employers. Is this the answer to our poor record of employer engagement in apprenticeships, or a massive abdication of responsibility?

“How sure can we be that public money is being used at optimum efficiency and, more importantly, how can we be sure that learners themselves are getting maximum benefit?”

To the delight of the CBI, the Government claims that their new measures will create jobs and stimulate growth. But I have questions. Anybody who has read the new consultation on FE reform will see that the balance between deregulation and ensuring value for money is a significant challenge.

In our sector and with apprenticeships in particular, are we really prepared for this kind of scaling back of data collection? How sure can we be that public money is being used at optimum efficiency and, more importantly, how can we be sure that learners themselves are getting maximum benefit?

Take “outcome incentive” payments for example, which BIS say will eliminate data and audit requirements. On whose terms defines a successful outcome for apprentices? A pay-rise or promotion; or simply gaining or retaining your job?

Data on apprenticeships is already shaky. What does exist tells us that we have a poor record of employer take-up when compared internationally, and an even poorer record in terms of successful completion. More recently, we've seen how so called ‘condensed’ apprenticeships have been funded, sparking a new commitment from the National Apprenticeship Service that they will keep a closer eye on quality.

I distinctly remember being in a meeting of the FE All Party Parliamentary Group when they were taking evidence from the CBI and the Federation of Small Businesses where I heard first-hand how many employers are simply put off by the paperwork. I buy this to an extent but can't help but question the extent to which this is true. When I see for example that freelance journalist Jan Murray is recruiting an apprentice, I wonder how businesses with full on HR teams can get away with saying that the paperwork is too much.

Ultimately though this is the start of a much bigger inevitable row. On the one hand, we're seeing moves from the Government that quality is – rightly – becoming a much bigger issue for them, yet on the other they are significantly reducing the amount of data that will be made available for public scrutiny.

Of course, employers recruiting and training apprentices should be welcomed with open arms and fully supported. A few years down the line and I would probably be less sceptical of the happily ever after scenario Mr Cable and Mr Hayes are hoping for.

*Shane Chownen was VP for FE at the NUS
Currently an FE consultant
tweeting as @shanechownen*

FE Week agitator

Quit the excuses and listen to those not attending



Many colleges are nervously counting 16-18 year-old learners in and out of classes this week, totting up the totals and making judgements about whether or not they are below, on or above recruitment targets.

When 16 year-old enrolments do not materialise into attendance the same excuses are rolled out at this time every year. The two classics are: “learners enrolled at lots of colleges and have followed their mates elsewhere”, and “those pesky schools have clung onto them”.

There are now two new excuses to consider this year. Firstly, there is of course the scrapping of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) to blame for putting learners off.

But what if in reality the EMA has had limited impact on recruitment. After all, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) research found that “65 out of every 69 individuals aged 16 who are eligible for the EMA would have stayed in education without the payment.”

The EMA only rewarded *regular* attendance, so it's not recruitment but retention and achievement rates which are most likely to suffer. As the IFS goes on to say: “those who receive EMA and would have stayed in education regardless of it might still benefit educationally through other channels: for example through better attendance, or more study time as a result of not having to take on a part-time job.”

Then there is the geographic and demographics excuse. The Treasury have long been predicting a decline in the number of 16-18 year-olds, and for the first time we saw a significant reduction in the overall number of 16-18 year-olds planned by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA). Yet this should have been taken into account when the YPLA set final allocation targets.

In reality missing targets is more likely owing to the curriculum not being as attractive as the neighbouring college and student services failing basic customer service standards.

Colleges failing to hit recruitment targets need to quickly call those that are not attending and act on what they are told.

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FE Week gets technical

FE week brings you, on one handy **pull-out**, version 2 of the eligibility and contribution rule decision trees for 2011/12

Source: *Learner Eligibility and Contribution Rules 2011/12*, Skills Funding Agency, August 2011

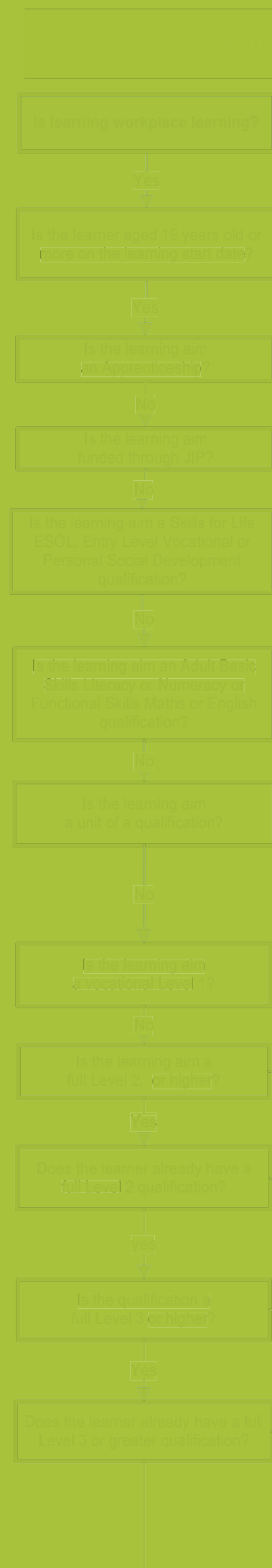
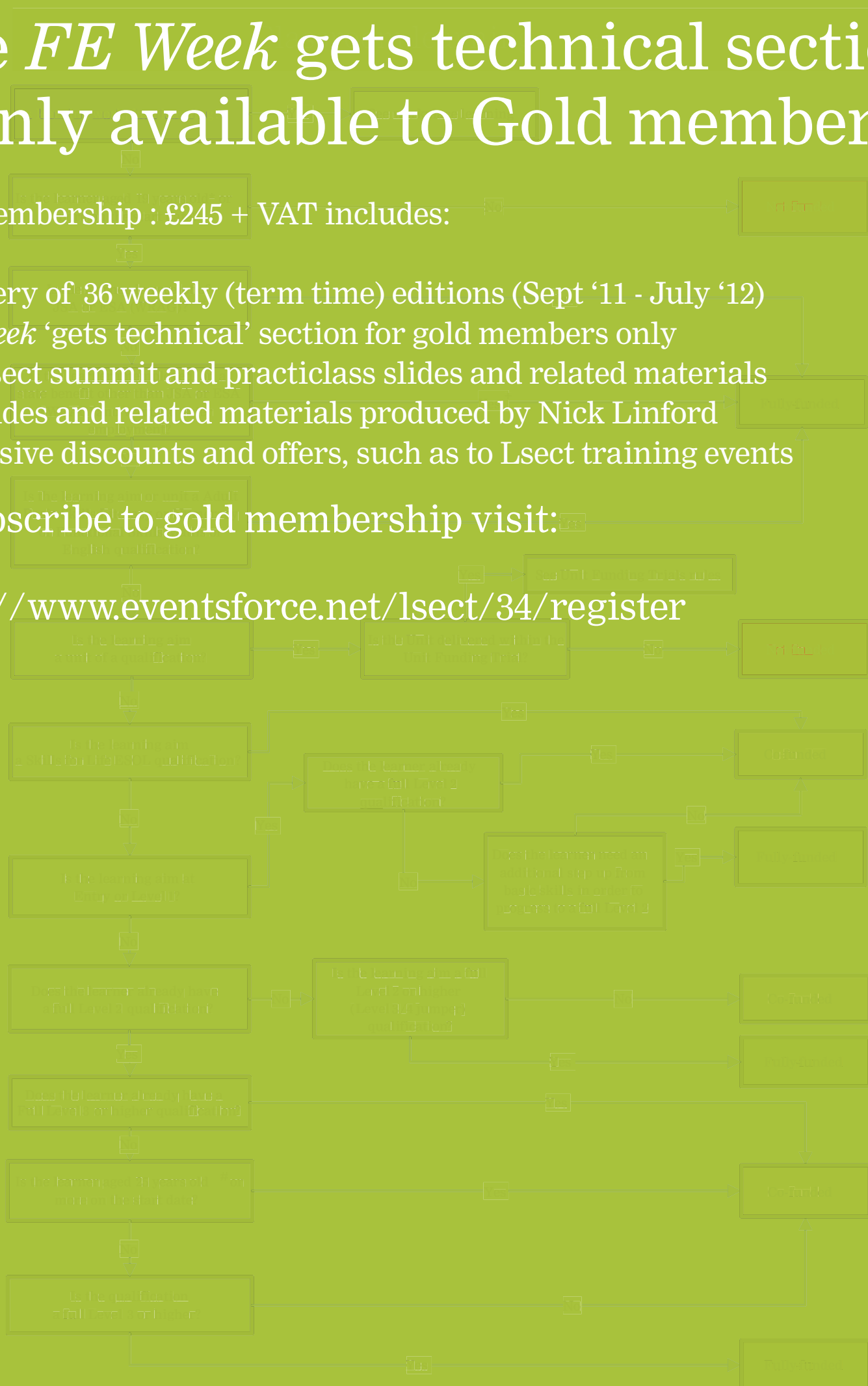
The *FE Week* gets technical section is only available to Gold members

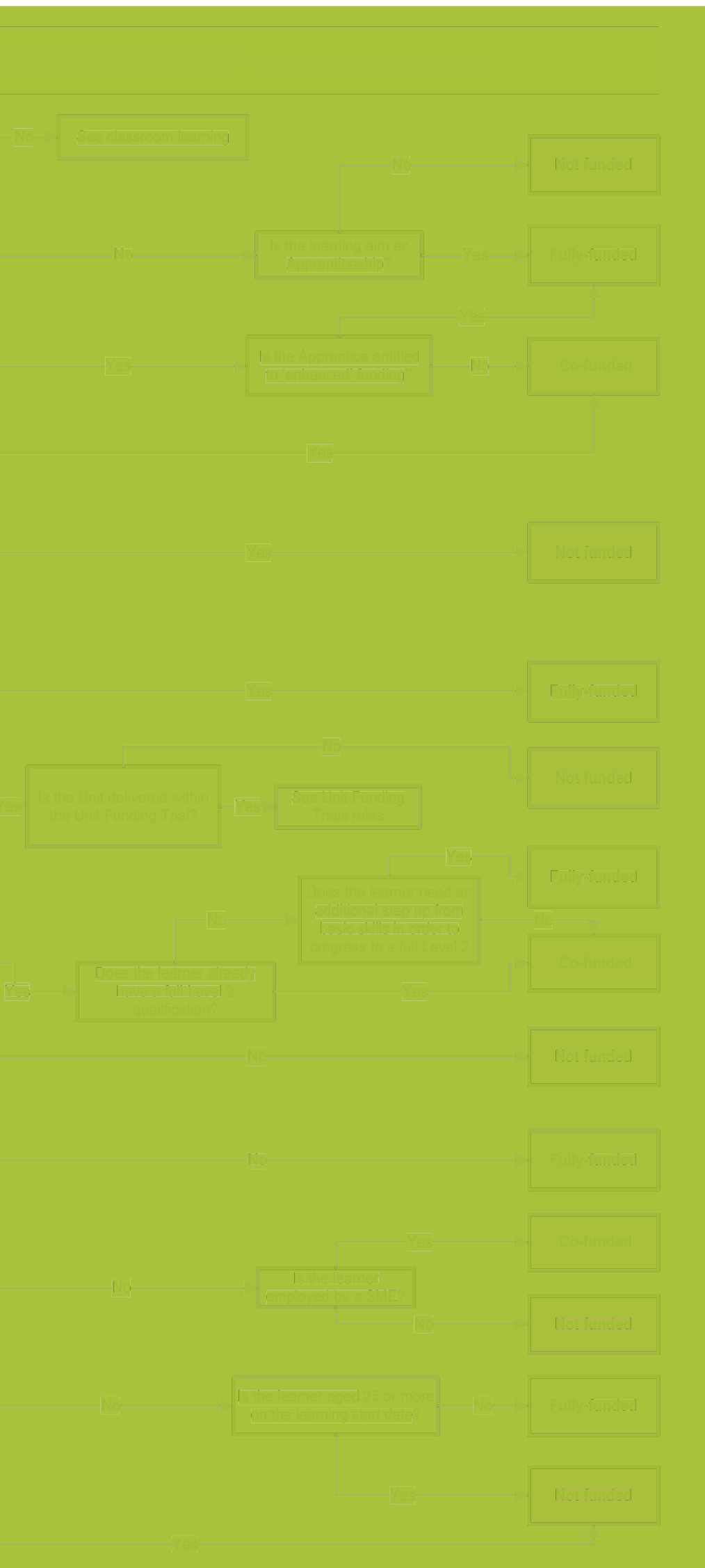
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18th October 2011 ~ London

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Liam Burns confirmed

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FE Week campus round-up

FE Week joins South Birmingham College Principal and 'Blind Dave' during their 1000 mile in 10 day charity challenge

FEWEEK cycled hard last month to join South Birmingham College Principal Mike Hopkins and local blind man Dave Heeley as part of their Top2Toe charity challenge.

We followed the pair as they exited Birmingham, creating an exclusive video report and in-depth interview about their progress.

Mike Hopkins and Dave Heeley were riding a tandem bicycle together as part of a gruelling 10 day charity ride, completing a total of 1,000 miles from John O'Groats to Land's End.

Dave said: "To have the support of a principal of a college really does add fantastic profile for Top2Toe."

"It also encourages many young people to follow what we are doing to help make a difference to the lives of people living with cancer".



FE Week would like to reassure readers that no journalists were harmed in the making of this video

The fundraiser also included a 26.2 mile marathon which 'Blind Dave' ran each morning in order to cover the colossal distance.

Dave hopes that the challenge will raise £100,000 for Macmillan Cancer Support. To date the JustGiving website alone has received over £52,000 in donations.

Mike Hopkins told FE Week: "I'm a keen racing cyclist and compete in road races, time trials and cyclocross, and the college and I have supported Macmillan Cancer for many years, so this was the perfect challenge for me to take part in."

You can see our video coverage, including an exclusive interview with Dave and Mike over on the FE Week YouTube Channel: www.youtube.com/feweekpodcast.

A written report can also be found on the FE Week website: www.tinyurl.com/feweekcycle



Nottingham College construct a course for teenagers



A new pre-apprenticeship programme has been launched at New College Nottingham (ncn) to help 16 to 19-year-olds find employment in the construction industry.

The course aims to equip young people with the skills needed to become an apprentice. Using its contacts with local employers, ncn will work with students to help them find a suitable apprenticeship.

Students gain experience in a real work environment at the College's purpose-built workshops where they can try a range of crafts including brickwork, plastering, plumbing, joinery and tiling. They also learn interview techniques, IT skills and are given support writing their CV.

Pre-apprentice Jerome McKenzie, 17, said: "This is a great chance for me and I'm eager to get started. I'm most interested in plastering and joinery but this course gives me the opportunity to try other trades, which will widen my skills and hopefully improve my chances of gaining employment."

Sparsholt College lines up their alpacas for the start of term



Animal Management students at Sparsholt College are in for a treat when they arrive this week. During the summer break their alpacas have been busy having babies and once Emily, Zara and Mina (mums are called Audrey, Crumpet and Crystal!) are head-collar trained the students will be able to work with them.

Isle of Wight College grows their own



Joanna Park (30) and mother of four, started on Level 2 Business Administration course to help her husband with his business, and then progressed on to Level 3. Her tutor told her she was very able and could progress to the Higher National Diploma in Business so she decided to 'go for it'.

Joanna said "This is the best thing I've ever done. It was great. I found that I was actually quite intelligent – the college had realised my potential! I did the first assignment and got a Distinction and suddenly realised I could do it."

Joanna graduated from the HND with a Distinction pass and progressed direct to the final year of a degree course at University of Portsmouth, graduating with a 1st class Honors degree in Business Administration. She is now studying the part-time Certificate in Education course and has just been appointed as a member of college staff to teach Level 2 Business Administration.

Douglas Clements, Head of Department said "Joanna was a star pupil and we are delighted to have her in our teaching team."

Picture shows Joanna receiving her HND from the Principal, Debbie Lavin.

Sixth Form education property hotspots



The Telegraph ran a story this week on the back of new research by the website PrimeLocation, who found parents are prepared to pay a £77,000 premium to live near the best schools and colleges.

The Telegraph published a guide to 20 prime education property hotspots across the country, naming what they regarded as the best schools and colleges that parents would be 'splashing the cash' to live close to.

As you would probably expect, most institutions listed were fee paying private schools, however.... FE Week was delighted to see that two state colleges made the list. Congratulations (we think) to Hills Road Sixth Form College (Cambridge) and Truro College (Truro).

Bigger and Batter Fish and Chips at Bournemouth and Poole College



FEWEEK challenged the twittersphere to come up with some fishy puns for this fabulous college story.

Apprentices at the Dorset college took part in a 24 hour challenge to make the largest portion of fish and chips – ever.

42 pieces of coley, 100 kgs of potatoes and a massive tub of mushy peas went into presenting the gargantuan dish.

The challenge was commissioned by Sky TV's Monster Munchies, a cookery programme hosted by Matt Dawson where size really does matter.

The story went far and wide and the nation's favourite meal even made the nation's favourite newspaper - The Sun!

The 'red topped' tabloid, famous for its headline gags put *FE Week* in a 'punny' frame of mind, and we challenged loyal twitter followers to come up with a fish-tastic take on the college serving up a mega portion.

And the winner is... Lee Mark Davies (@leemarkdavies)

Lee went on, and on... and on with the puns, but our favourite is: "If @FEweek were serious about fish it would cover schools not colleges..."

Lee wins an exclusive *FE Week* mug!

You can read more on the story online here <http://www.feweek.co.uk/index.php/2011/08/25/fish-and-chips-go-bigger-and-batter-in-bournemouth/>

City College boxer wins Junior ABA title



One of City College Brighton and Hove's sporting apprentices, Archie Hutchins, has recently been crowned ABAE Junior Champion. Archie has been an Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (AASE) student at the college since the scheme began last year. Archie's hard

work paid off when he beat John Newell of Shannon ABC by 27 points to 20 in the 2011 Junior ABAE Championships finals in Kent. "Archie's proved himself to be the best boxer in his age group in Britain and to say I'm thrilled is an understatement." said his coach, Adam Haniver.

Trafford College student gets a yes, yes, yes and yes from the X-Factor judges and already more than half a million YouTube views



No this isn't a line from 'Harry met Sally' it was the unanimous decision from the X-Factor judging panel to put a Trafford College student through to the show's boot camp phase.

Viewers of last Saturday's audition show saw 19-year-old Mischa Bryan wow the panel with an amazing rendition of Aretha Franklin's R.E.S.P.E.C.T.

Her remarkable performance had ex Destiny's Child singer, Kelly Rowland on her feet and grooving along. Mischa received cheers and a standing ovation from the audience, with Louis Walsh telling her: "That's how to do an audition!"

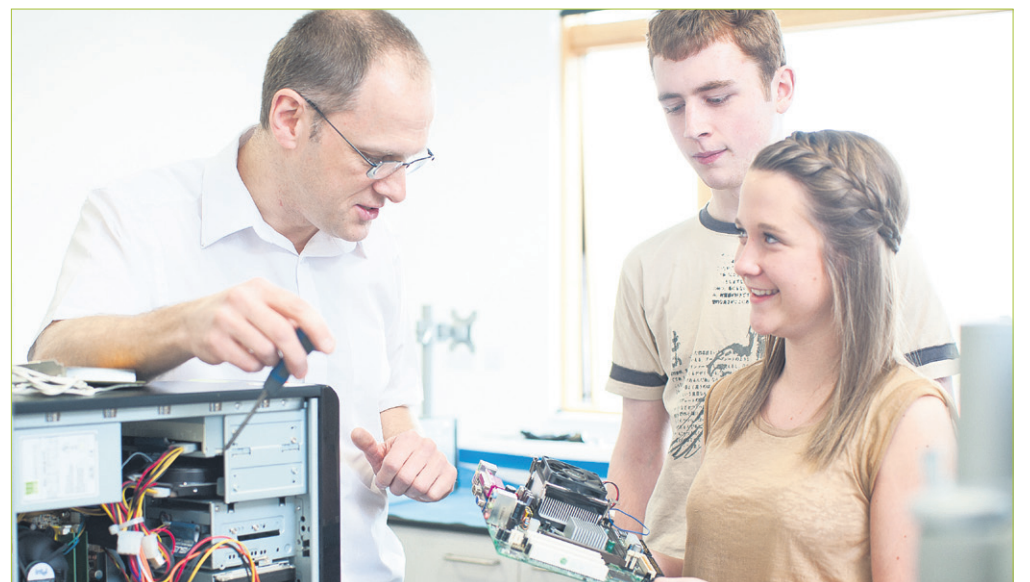
Mischa has completed her first year of a vocal artist programme at the college's Music Base site in Manchester, and is set to return this month, although further success with the X-Factor may mean her studies are delayed!

Trafford College's head of music, Jacqueline Hewitt, said; "She has an individual style that really wowed the judges and all tutors and students at The Music Base can't wait to see how she performs at boot camp."

See Misha's electric performance on YouTube at <http://tinyurl.com/43ejtjj>

FE Week wishes her every success.

Web of opportunity at South Cheshire



Students who want to unravel a web of IT opportunities can sign up for an exciting new course at South Cheshire College.

The Access to IT programme is the only course of its kind in the North West and can lead to a place at university or a prosperous career in the IT industry.

The one year course, which isn't dependent on previous IT qualifications, focuses on different elements of computing such as computer systems, software design, database applications and website development.

Students will also develop core skills such

as communication, numerical and IT skills and work with others to solve IT problems.

The programme targets students who have a passion for computers and want to extend their knowledge of IT.

Peter Jackson, Course Team Leader for the Access to IT course, said: "This is a very unique course and one we are introducing for the first time at South Cheshire College.

"This should appeal to anyone who has a passion for computers and can open up lots of different opportunities in the IT world."

ALT delegates seek technological innovation despite challenging times



Councillor Reverend Alan Taylor, Lord Mayor of Leeds, officially started the three day conference

The education sector is seeking innovation at a time when budgets are increasingly being slashed. Colleges are now looking to technology not only as a way of improving efficiency and running costs, but as a means to improving the student experience in further education (FE).

The Association for Learning Technology (ALT) annual conference allows education providers, technologists, researchers and policy makers to come together and discuss the latest technological developments.

The event was titled 'Thriving in a colder and more challenging climate', a chilling reminder of the financial circumstances which the further education sector finds itself in at the moment.

Seb Schmoller, Chief Executive of ALT, said: "At times of crisis, and in many respects, there is a crisis; there are opportunities to use innovation as a way of overcoming the pressure that people are under."

"The message 'sit tight and carry on' is not an option, in the current economic climate people need to think carefully about how they can take advantage of technology and use it in a way that will benefit whatever they're focussed on."

Hundreds of delegates crammed into the main auditorium at the University of Leeds on Tuesday morning. Councillor Reverend Alan Taylor, the Lord Mayor of Leeds, opened the proceedings and welcomed the international attendees - some of which had come from as far as New Zealand, Japan and India.

Taylor said: "There's never been a greater demand placed on teaching to reach its learners using all the tools of the trade."

"It's important that all young learners are equipped to use technology to their advantage." This was followed by a keynote speech given by Miguel Brechner, President of the Uruguayan Centre for Technological and Social Inclusion (CITS). Miguel's presentation detailed Plan

Ceibal, a project that hopes to give a laptop to every student and teacher in the country.

Brechner said: "When the President of Uruguay announced in 2006 that all children in public education should have a laptop, with connectivity before his mandate, everybody thought that that was a dream and that was vapourware in politics. But that was not so."

Uruguay has accomplished a remarkable feat in the context of both education and technology. The government initially aimed to deliver 300,000 laptops over the space of 3 years, but has since gone on to deliver more than 450,000 units. This means every child between the first year of primary school and the third year of secondary school now owns their own public funded laptop.

As the first wave of children grow up, Plan Ceibal is set to filter into the Uruguay equivalent of both further and higher education. The government's dedication to providing widespread internet access has also been successful. Miguel said: "We have given internet and connectivity to 2500 schools and high schools."

"99% of the children have connectivity in

"The message 'sit tight and carry on' is not an option, in the current economic climate people need to think carefully about how they can take advantage of technology"

their educational facilities, and 180,000 (40%) don't have to walk more than 300 metres to get internet in our own network."

Plan Ceibal shares many similarities with the FE sector in England. The project was conceived as a social inclusion programme and



There was live tweeting throughout the three days, with #altc2011. See the @FEWeek guide.

based on three 'pillars'; equality, learning and technology. These ideals will feel familiar to anyone who champions equal opportunities in education, and asks whether access to laptops and internet connectivity should ever be perceived as a 'right'.

Delegates debated over whether the importance of technology has grown to a point where it is now deemed a social necessity. Questions remained over whether such a model could ever be considered in a nation such as our own.

The ALT conference also had a number of technology related exhibitors such as Adobe, Google and the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) present.

Malcolm Read, Executive Secretary of JISC said: "This is one of relatively few conferences that attracts a good audience both from further education and higher education."

"Clearly the use of technology in improving and enhancing the student experience, and the quality of learning and teaching is important to both sectors."

Malcolm Read was also attending as an in-



Delegates were enthralled by the video presentation from Miguel Brechner, President of the Uruguayan Centre for Technological and Social Inclusion (CITS)



Words by Nick Summers
Photos by Nick Linford



vited speaker who discussed student feedback, e-assessment and open educational resources during the event.

He added: “(Technology) is one of those areas where further education makes a very significant contribution, perhaps because they can be a bit more flexible and responsive.

“They can also perhaps be more risk taking than universities in the way they tend to be in the innovative use of technology for teaching.”

The ALT conference is also host to the Learning Technologist of the Year Award, a prestigious prize recognising excellent practice and outstanding achievement in the learning technology field.

The team award category was given to the In-Folio Implementation Team, five organisations who collectively developed an e-portfolio for use in the Independent Specialist Colleges Sector. The Infolio system is particularly remarkable because it enables learners with disabilities or learning difficulties to record their achievements and abilities.

Shirley Evans, a JISC Techdis associate who worked on the project said: “Infolio can be used by a range of students, including students that

have a learning difficulty.

“For example, it can also be used by students for who have a visual impairment, because they can resize the text and change the colour contrast. So it’s very flexible in that respect.” Sal Cooke, Director at JISC Techdis and JISC services was thrilled to have In-Folio considered for the accolade. She said: “It’s really exciting for us to have been nominated and to win this award.

“The ALT Annual Conference is one of the best networking opportunities if you want to see what’s current in terms of research and what people are thinking”

“I think that the recognition of the university, the service at JISC Techdis and those specialist colleges coming together, to actually give something back to the rest of the sector and get

recognition for that is fantastic.”

She added the tool will now be used in 40 colleges and rolled out in other parts of the FE and skills sector.

Although the ALT conference is aimed at all levels of education, the event attracts a much higher number of delegates from higher education (HE) than FE.

Ellen Lessner, E-Learning co-ordinator at Abingdon Witney College believes this could be because the event is held so closely to enrolment time in the FE sector.

She said: “It’s a big problem, I’m on the ALT FE Committee and it is something that we discuss every year.

“It’s got a lot to offer and there are a small number of us from FE who are allowed, or have managed to get out at the busiest time of the year.”

Ellen was blogging the event on behalf of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), providing coverage that is tailored particularly for the further education sector.

She said: “I think the content is excellent. It’s one of the best networking opportunities if you want to see what’s current in terms of research

and what people are thinking.”

The ALT conference was a vital opportunity for FE providers to learn about technology and how it can be used to improve their own services. It’s unclear whether the event will be able to attract a wider audience from the FE sector in the future, but this didn’t take away from the quality and beneficial content on offer at Leeds.



The trusty pen and paper was in competition with lap-tops, tablets and smart phones



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“FE Week is the sort of publication that the sector has been crying out for. It places FE at the centre, not the margins of government agendas.”

Maxine Room, Principal of Lewisham College

“FE week is really showcasing the best that FE has to offer and tackling in detail, the issues that affect our sector.”

Paul Head, Principal of the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London

“FE Week is a great read and I look forward to it landing on my desk every week. It's much needed in the sector and long overdue.”

Karen Dobson, Principal of Newcastle under Lyme College

Calendar key

- Publication of *FE Week*
- Typically term time
- Bank Holiday
- Weekends and typically out of term time

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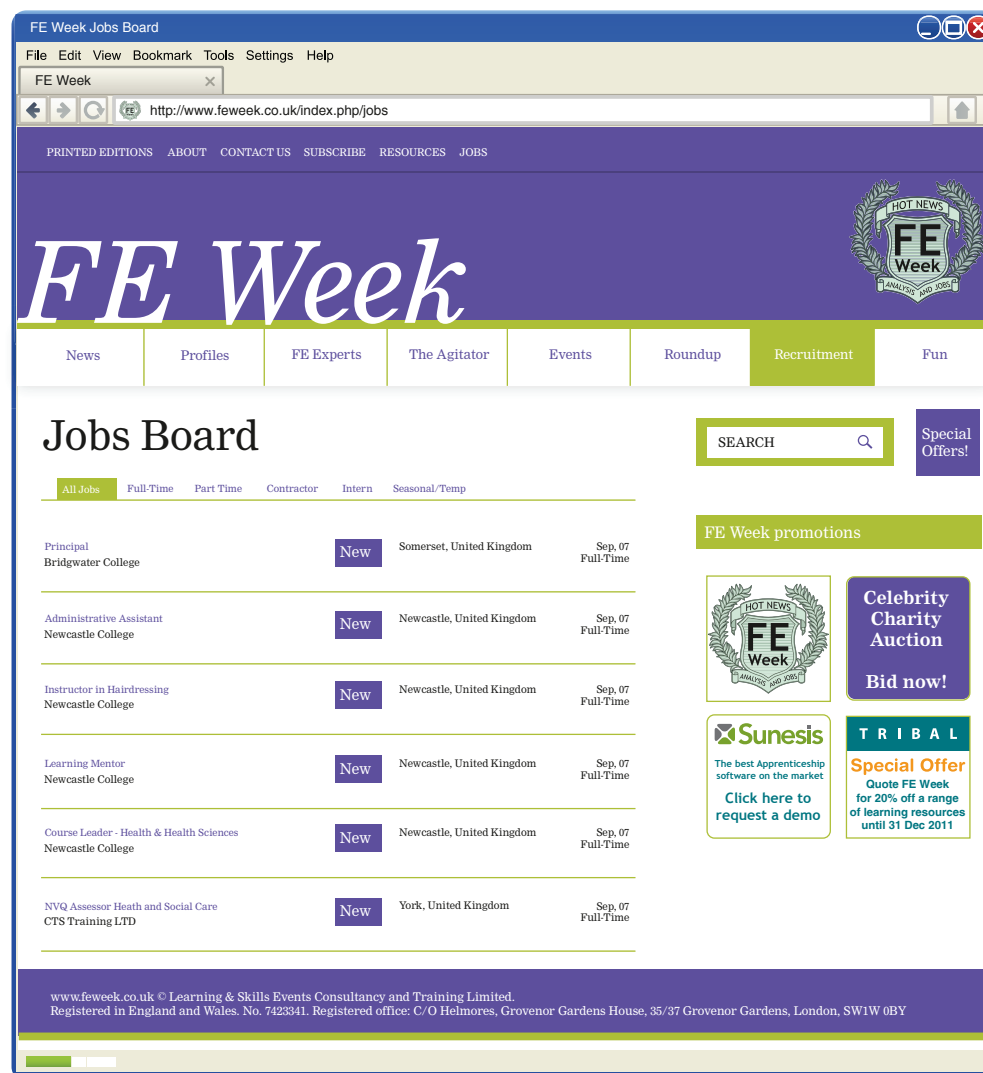
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PRINCIPAL

A rare opportunity to lead one of the sector's most outstanding colleges

Bridgwater College is seeking to appoint a Principal with the vision, drive and personal qualities to sustain the well-established culture of continuous improvement and positive performance for which the College is renowned.

Rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, Bridgwater College is an extremely successful tertiary college and is responsible for the vast majority of post-16 education and training in Bridgwater and the surrounding areas. With Beacon status, the achievement of 11 national Beacon Awards in recent years and the highest exam and course results in the area, the College owes much of its success to two fundamental philosophies, which it is assumed anyone who joins the College will share: students come first, and all staff employed at the College are team players.

We are looking for an inspirational leader who will lead this team, build on the achievements and strengths of the College, and further raise standards and the reputation of Bridgwater College. He or she will be a highly experienced education professional, with strong, proven leadership and management skills. He or

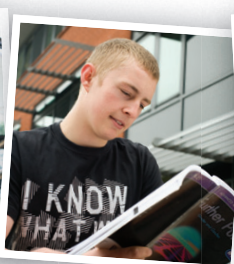
she will be passionate about student and organisational success and committed to meeting the needs of the local and regional community and stakeholders. Excellent communication skills and high levels of energy and stamina will be required to motivate staff and students to share a common set of values and help develop a corporate culture which encourages individuals to work effectively as teams, whilst also performing at the very highest levels as individuals.

In return, we are offering a negotiable six figure salary dependent on experience, and an exceptional opportunity to work for one of the country's top colleges, with outstanding state-of-the-art facilities and resources, supported by a professional and positive team who are dedicated to achieving educational excellence.

Apply online at www.bridgwater.ac.uk or telephone **01278 441221**

Closing date: 12noon on Friday 16 September 2011

Interview dates: 11, 12, 13 October 2011



Get involved!

What better way to kick off the launch of issue one than with a glitzy and glamorous event, with all the proceeds going to the Helena Kennedy Foundation?

The *FE Week* Celebrity Charity Auction is set to be the biggest night of the FE year, bringing together leaders for some fantastic food, music, fun and fundraising.

On the first night of the Association of Colleges' Annual Conference (15th November 2011), we'll be serving up a beautiful three course meal and an elaborate high-profile auction at the Banqueting Suite of Birmingham's City Hall.

All the proceeds from the event will be donated to the Helena Kennedy Foundation, the independent charity dedicated to helping disadvantaged students from the further and higher education sector.

The amazing items being auctioned off include a two night luxury tree house experience, football tickets for Manchester United vs. Liverpool and a Ferrari 360 Modena experience at Silverstone.

All of these once in a lifetime items will be auctioned off by the The Perrier Award winning comedian and broadcaster Simon Fanshawe .

The auction has already kicked off online here: <http://www.feweek.co.uk/index.php/auction>, so you can bid online now for items up until 6pm on the 15th November, when the live auction takes over in Birmingham.

You can book tickets for this glittering event here: <https://www.eventsforce.net/lsect/36/home>

Spaces are limited, so book early to guarantee your place!

If you, your college or your company would also like to donate an item to the auction, go here: <http://lsect.co.uk/auction-donation.asp> to find out more.

We look forward to seeing you there!

The *FE Week* Team

FE Week mini-mascot

Follow the adventures of *FE Week*'s biggest and smallest fan!

“Mostly this week I have been keeping mum and dad awake”

And you can follow our *FE Week* mini-mascot on Twitter [@daniellinford](https://twitter.com/daniellinford)



FE Week Celebrity Charity Auction

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In partnership with Tribal and NCFE on behalf of the Helena Kennedy Foundation

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Helena Kennedy Foundation

All the proceeds from the *FE Week* Celebrity Charity Auction will be donated to the Helena Kennedy Foundation.

This important national, independent, and educational charity exists to improve life chances for disadvantaged students from the further and adult education sectors by providing bursaries, mentoring, training and support, enabling them to go on to university and move on successfully into graduate professions.

The Helena Kennedy Foundation is the *FE Week*, Tribal and NCFE's chosen charity in 2011, and this event will round-off a year of fundraising in style.

The online auction (see items below) will be open for bids until 6pm on the first night of the annual Association of Colleges conference (15th November 2011), when the exclusive live celebrity auction will take over in the Banqueting Suite at Birmingham's City Hall.

In addition to bidding online, if you would like to attend this glittering event on the 15th November 2011 please find out more and book [here](#) (demand is expected to be high and places are limited, so book early).

Also, if you, your college or your company would like to donate an item to the auction, please [click here](#) to find out how.

Get bidding!

SEARCH

Q

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Celebrity Charity Auction

Bid now!

Sunesis

The best Apprenticeship software on the market

Click here to request a demo

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Quote FE Week for 20% off a range of learning resources until 31 Dec 2011

Latest @feweek tweets

Today @bigovuk will announce 'sweeping away' #apprenticeship red tape for employers: <http://t.co/KMWQrJS> < leave a comment #FurtherEd ~ 2 days ago

Our video podcast is live! Includes a vital round up of #FurtherEd news and our exclusive mug competition. youtu.be/p6YRwEpZFwU ~ 5 days ago

Ofsted proposes changes to inspection of FE providers tinyurl.com/3fm3w62 ~ 5 days ago

FE Week news in brief

Ofsted proposes changes to inspection of FE providers
Ofsted has launched a consultation regarding proposals to revise the inspection of further education colleges, work-based learning providers, adult and community learning (ACL) provision and 'Next Step' ... [More](#)

£6.5 million given to train engineering students in renewable energy
Business Secretary Vince Cable announced a £6.5 million investment yesterday to help train top engineering students in a new Industrial Doctorate Centre in Offshore Renewable Energy (IDCORE). Leading ... [More](#)

Neet' young people hits record second quarter high
The number of 18 to 24 year-olds currently not in employment, education or training (Neet) has shot up to 18.4% in England. The figure, taken from April to June of this year, is the highest second quarter ... [More](#)

U-turn on ESOL funding clarified by the Skills Funding Agency
The Skills Funding Agency has confirmed that all unemployed learners, including those on ESOL courses, who are both on an income related benefit and seeking work will continue to be fully funded in 2011 ... [More](#)

Businesses ask FE providers to 'stop selling and start listening'
Further Education (FE) colleges and training providers should listen to businesses and stop focussing on quick sales, according to new research. The report, commissioned by the Further Education Reputation ... [More](#)

Unreachable targets put the Work Programme at risk of collapse
Almost every organisation involved in delivering the Work Programme is at risk of having their contract terminated because of unachievable performance targets set by the Department for Work and Pensions ... [More](#)

Current Items

Manchester United (Home) vs Liverpool (Away) (Saturday 11th February 2012) Executive Lounge Tickets

Knights Lounge Package: This Elite package includes:

- North East Quadrant Luxury padded seating
- Three course choice menu
- Half time tea & coffee...more

63 Days, 18 Hours Going for - £100.00 [Bid Now](#)

Apple Gadget Collection

Sponsored by Perspective. This collection of Apple Gadgets is sure to include something for everyone! Including: 160GB Silver Ipad Classic 16GB Iphone 4 in White 64GB 1...more

63 Days, 18 Hours Going for - £750.00 [Bid Now](#)

£1000 Selfridges voucher

Sponsored by EMPRA. The opportunity to spend an afternoon accompanied by a personal shopper in Selfridges with £1000 voucher to spend. RRP £1000...more

63 Days, 18 Hours Going for - £250.00 [Bid Now](#)

Champagne & Mixed Wine Cases

A lavish selection of first-rate wines from the world's most hallowed vineyards Whether you're celebrating, marking an occasion or simply spoiling yourself, you'll not go wrong with these exquisite fine wines. Two 'miracle-vintage'...more

63 Days, 18 Hours Going for - £26.00 [Bid Now](#)

Two Night Murder Mystery Weekend for Two

Come and enjoy a fun and entertaining two night murder mystery weekend and help solve the crime and find the killer while you laugh! A chilling yet silly plot will last over your two night break with twists and secrets hanging in the air to help you ...more

63 Days, 18 Hours Going for - £102.00 [Bid Now](#)

Ferrari 360 Modena Experience at Silverstone

A breathtaking supercar boasting power, style and sophistication, the Ferrari 360 Modena is the perfect vehicle for commanding the challenging Silverstone racetrack. After a briefing on safety and driving techniques you'll enjoy preparation laps in...more

63 Days, 18 Hours Going for - £100.00 [Bid Now](#)

Survival Weekend (basic) in UK

The "Survival Weekend" will begin with an introduction to the safe use of Bushcraft Tools such as the Knife, Saw and Axe. We will then progress through a range of skills based on their priority to Wilderness Survival. The basic skills of Shelter Cons...more

63 Days, 18 Hours Starting at - £25.00 [Bid Now](#)

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