Award-winning journalism from the only newspaper dedicated to further education and skills Week FE **APPRENTICESHIP WORTHY AAC AWARD COLLEGES IN NEED** 1% **OF MERGER RESCUE** WINNERS REVEALED ACHIEVEMENT RISE PAGE 6 & 7 INVESTIGATION **PAGE 13** PAGE 3

Highlights from AAC, pages 8 to 13

OFSTED TO 'EXPOSE' RIP-OFF SUBCONTRACTING TOP-SLICES > Chief inspector says new monitoring visits will reveal prime colleges

and training providers are simply "sitting back and taking the money" BILLY CAMDEN @BILLYCAMDEN See page 9

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FE WEEK

FRIDAY, MARCH 23, 2018



NEWS

Achievement rates up across the board

PAUL OFFORD @Paulofford

pprenticeship achievement rates rose in 2016/17, according to the latest Department for Education statistics. The figure for all apprenticeship levels went up by a full percentage point on the previous academic year, according to new

previous academic year, according to new National Achievement Rate tables, from 66.7 per cent in 2015/16 to 67.7 per cent.

The good news chimed with encouraging words from Ofsted's chief inspector in a speech to delegates at FE Week's Annual Apprenticeships Conference.

Amanda Spielman said inspections into apprenticeship provision between September 2017 and February 2018 were a "cause for optimism".

The achievement rates, previously included under the umbrella term "qualification success rates", show how many learners who start a programme go on to successfully complete it.

Higher-level apprenticeships saw the biggest increase in the period, from 58.3 per cent to 61.9 per cent.

While there were rises across all levels, the lowest was at intermediate level, which only increased from 66.2 per cent to 67.1 per cent. Among providers with a cohort of 1,000 or more apprentices, GP Strategies Training, the Royal Navy, and Skills To Group had the most impressive achievement rates last academic year.

Their completion figures were 88.9 per cent, 87.1 per cent and 86 per cent respectively.

The DfE also provided a breakdown for different sectors: the education and training sector fared best in 2016/17 with a 76.5-percent rate.

After that was information and communication technology with 75 per cent, and then leisure, travel and tourism with 73.7 per cent.

The lowest achievement rates were in the arts, media and publishing sector, at 64.8 per cent.

Ms Spielman told AAC delegates that Ofsted looked at apprenticeships at 55 providers between September 2017 and February 2018.

"We found three fifths of them to be 'good' or 'outstanding', with 16 'requires improvement'. Six were 'inadequate'," she announced.

"This means that four in 10 providers did not offer high-quality training for apprentices. There is no way of dressing this up: it is not good enough."

"But looking at it another way, the 'good' and 'outstanding' providers were generally the larger ones, so 33,000 apprentices were in

Top 10 large* apprenticeship providers for 2016/17 achievement rates

| Provider | Overall Cohort | Overall Achievement Rate | | |
|--|----------------|--------------------------|--|--|
| GP STRATEGIES TRAINING LIMITED | 6,250 | 88.9% | | |
| ROYAL NAVY | 2,470 | 87.1% | | |
| SKILLS TO GROUP LIMITED | 1,330 | 86.0% | | |
| IMPACT LEARNING & DATA SOLUTIONS LIMITED | 1,550 | 84.3% | | |
| ROYAL AIR FORCE | 1,150 | 84.2% | | |
| DUDLEY COLLEGE | 1,580 | 83.7% | | |
| GATESHEAD COLLEGE | 1,900 | 81.1% | | |
| MIDDLESBROUGH COLLEGE | 1,000 | 80.6% | | |
| BRITISH ARMY | 8,580 | 79.6% | | |
| WALSALL COLLEGE | 1,080 | 78.1% | | |
| * Cohort of 1,000 or more apprentices | | | | |

Source: 2016/17 National achievement rate tables

Apprenticeships overall achievement rates by level (2014/15 to 2016/17)

| Level | 2014/15 (%) | 2015/16 (%) | 2016/17 (%) |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| All Levels | 66.3 | 66.7 | 67.7 |
| Intermediate Level | 65.9 | 66.2 | 67.1 |
| Advanced Level | 67.4 | 68.2 | 69.3 |
| Higher Level | 58.2 | 58.3 | 61.9 |

'good' or 'outstanding' provision".

This covers almost 80 per cent of the overall places, which she said is a lot higher than the provision investigated in the previous year.

"Then, only 60 per cent of apprentices were being trained in providers of the same quality, excluding Learndirect," she said.

She stressed that while this is not a perfect year-on-year comparison, "I do believe the figures are cause for optimism about quality in the sector". Her general outlook on apprenticeships is far more positive than her predecessor Sir Michael Wilshaw's, who was constantly worried that quality was overlooked as the government ploughed onto towards its target of creating three million apprenticeship starts by 2020.

He commissioned a highly critical report into apprenticeship standards in 2015, which warned that "in recent years, inspectors have seen too much weak provision that undermines the value of apprenticeships".

Consultation opens on post-18 funding review

PAUL OFFORD @PAULOFFORD

consultation on the government's incoming review of post-18 education and funding has launched, to close on May 2.

It is expected to focus on funding around levels four and above, and look seriously at how colleges can run more provision at these levels.

The aim is to create "a joined-up system that works for everyone", according to the supporting online consultation document.

An independent panel, chaired by Philip Augar alongside five other experts, is therefore seeking evidence on "how to support young people in making effective choices between academic, technical and vocational routes after 18".

It also wants to work out how best to "promote a more dynamic market in education and training provision", "ensure the post-18 education system is accessible to all", and "encourage the development of the skills that we need as a country".

The panel will look at how students and graduates contribute to the cost of their studies, to "ensure funding arrangements across post-18 education in the future are transparent and do not stop people from accessing higher education or training". An interim stage will be published this year before the government concludes the

year before the government concludes the overall review in early 2019. "This is an ambitious and wide-ranging

review. We begin with no preconceptions. Our priority is to undertake a thorough examination of the evidence and to hear from a broad range of stakeholders who like us are committed to ensuring the system works for everyone," Mr Augar said.

Significantly for FE, the prime minister announced the launch of the review at Derby College rather than a university, a decision welcomed by the boss of the Association of Colleges, David Hughes.

"The review is significant because it is the first proper review of higher education, post-18, level four-plus provision I have ever seen," said Mr Hughes, who was provider services director for the Skills Funding Agency until 2011.

He believes that the government is open to presenting colleges with potential opportunities to expand in to the higher education market.

"That includes opening up fair funding to incentivise people to consider levels four, five and six part-time flexible learning as well," he continued.



The terms of reference suggest that it will look at how "we can ensure our post-18 education system is joined up and supported by a funding system that works for students and taxpayers".

One factor identified as a major problem is too much emphasis on three-year academic degrees.

"In recent years, the system has encouraged growth in three-year degrees for 18 year-olds, but does not offer a comprehensive range of high-quality alternative routes for the many young people who pursue a technical or vocational path at this age," it said. All "interested parties" are encouraged to submit evidence for the panel's consideration through the consultation.

"Responses are particularly welcome from education and training providers, academics, employers, students, learners, graduates, student representative groups, professional representative groups and learned societies as well as from the public," a spokesperson said.

The review is separate to one announced this week by the skills minister Anne Milton, which may look into FE funding on its own, provided her boss Damian Hinds lets it go ahead (see page 4).

Traineeship progressions improve – but only so far

PAUL OFFORD @Paulofford

he proportion of young people who complete a traineeship and move on to an apprenticeship has risen but it still sits below 40 per cent.

A pre-employment programme, traineeships were launched five years ago in the government's drive to support lowskilled unemployed people below the age of 25 onto apprenticeships. But interest – which was never massive in the first place – has been flagging lately: starts feel from 24,100 in 2015/16 to 20,300 in the last academic year.

Part of the problem has been confusion over their purpose. It was never specified that traineeships should primarily be to prepare people for apprenticeships, and the government also accepts progression to a job, further full-time education, or other training as acceptable outcomes.

FE Week reported on concerns last year that the proportion of progressions to apprenticeships had fallen below 20 per cent in 2015/16, but things have now somewhat improved.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has said the rate stood at 37 per cent in 2016/17, or 3,620 of 9,760 total progressions.

"Any increase in traineeships leading to apprenticeships is



welcome – it comes on the back of persistent pressure from our front bench and a range of stakeholders, including FE Week itself," said the shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden.

"There is still a huge way for this government to go – they are not even yet at 40 per cent yet.

> "The number of traineeships on offer needs to be rapidly expanded, and the persistent failure of this government to give proper support, marketing and resources to this key enabler of social mobility is costing our young people dear."

The overall rate of progression is less encouraging in 2016/17. If total starts are Gordon Marsden compared to total progression, the figure is 48 per cent, meaning that just over half of all trainees failed to progress to any desired outcome.

Mr Marsden hosted a parliamentary event with the Association of Employment and Learning Providers in January, in which he attempted to renew enthusiasm from the government and the wider sector for traineeships.

Qube Learning was among the providers present, and admitted at the time that there is a problem with perception.

The company's boss Joe Crossley was pleased to learn this week about the improved progression rate.

"In our experience, the traineeship learners that are most likely to stay on programme are the ones who spend three or four months focusing on their employment, before enrolling onto an apprenticeship," he said. "So yes, this progression is a positive thing."

AELP boss Mark Dawe was also heartened by the upturn in progressions.

"But AELP still firmly believes that getting a job or some further education is an equally positive outcome from the programme for young people, who often come from a very disadvantaged background," he added.

"It means that most are earning and many then have the opportunity to go on and do an apprenticeship."

The government has launched a new social media campaign to promote traineeships.

It is part of its existing 'Get in go far' drive which it has already used to spread the word about apprenticeships through Facebook and Twitter.

This new branch of the campaign will operate under the slogan 'Traineeships: Everything you need to know'.

The campaign states that "traineeships are designed to help young people aged 16 to 24 who don't yet have the skills or experience needed to get an apprenticeship or job".

"Traineeships are providing great opportunities for young people to get the skills and experience they need to get apprenticeships and other jobs," said a DfE spokesperson.

"We are working hard to promote traineeships through campaigns like 'Get in go far', so many more young people can benefit from the amazing opportunities apprenticeships bring."

education sector and will update the House shortly."

The Sixth-Form Colleges Association had claimed the review as a "significant win" for its 'Support Our Sixth-Formers' campaign, which was backed by FE Week.

One of its main objectives has been to secure a review of sixth-form funding to ensure it is linked to the "realistic costs of delivering a rounded, high-quality curriculum".

He considered it to be an "important step on the road to ensuring that 16-to-19 providers are fairly and sufficiently funded".

The Support Our Sixth-Formers campaign was dealt a blow in January when the DfE ruled out an increase in funding for 16- to 18-year-olds next year.

In a letter to providers, the department said the national base rates of $\pounds4,000$ per full-time student aged 16 to 17 and $\pounds3,300$ for 18-year-olds were to be "maintained for academic year 2018 to 2019 as are the part time funding rates".

The campaign, also backed by the Association of Colleges, has been calling for a £200 "SOS uplift" in 16-to-18 per-pupil funding rates.

The DfE's spokesperson provided a limited amount of information about Ms Milton's review.

"We are looking at resilience, funding, regulation and the institutional structures within the sector to make sure that we can deliver high-quality provision," they said. "This is not an external review, but it will draw on the views of providers across the sector."

Damian Hinds casts doubt on Anne Milton's FE funding review

PAUL OFFORD @Paulofford

A review into FE funding only just announced by the skills minister will just be held internally at the Department for Education.

Anne Milton announced the review in the House of Commons on March 19, but her plans appeared to hit a snag after the education secretary Damian Hinds refused to acknowledge its existence at a committee meeting of MPs just two days later.

A DfE spokesperson subsequently clarified that while the review would go ahead, it will not be on an external basis.

Emma Hardy, the MP for Hull West and Hessle, asked him for more information on the review at a meeting of the education select committee, after warning that successive funding cuts had a grave effect on FE provision.

"Clearly there is a problem with funding for FE. On Monday your department announced a

review of FE funding," she said. "What are the timescales for this and how will it feed into the ongoing post-18 review?"

His response baffled the MPs who were present.

"I didn't announce a review on Monday," he said.

He did speak more generally about the importance of maintaining a "resilient" FE sector, however.

"We said quite rightly that we always need to be looking at the resilience of the sector – different parts of the education system including FE colleges," he said. "The comprehensive spending review will come when it comes and that will be in 2019, but we do know already that with the growth of apprenticeships funding, colleges will get a big slice of that, T-levels will also provide funding."

Ms Hardy then cut in, saying: "Thank you, so it appears there isn't a plan to review FE funding."

Mr Hinds did not correct her.

The DfE later said that a "review" would



still be going ahead – but not on an "external" basis – indicating that it might be on a smaller scale than previously thought.

Ms Milton announced the review during education questions in the House of Commons, after she was asked what the DfE had made of "recent trends" in education funding for 16- to 19-year-olds.

Alongside another review in the funding of all education post-18 (see page 3), she said "we are also looking at the efficiency and resilience of the FE sector", apparently in a separate review.

"We need to make sure that existing and forecast funding and regulatory structures meet the costs of high-quality, first-class provision," she continued.

"I've asked my officials to assess how far the current funding system meets the costs of high-quality provision in the further

NEWS

DfE announces which providers will be protected from **AEB devolution**

PAUL OFFORD @PAULOFFORD

he handful of providers which will be protected from the devolution of the adult education budget have been announced. They will be funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency for two years until 2020/21 after devolution goes ahead, the skills minister confirmed in Parliament.

They have now been named, and feature providers which qualify for a "residential uplift" for their learning provision, which receive more than two thirds of their income from the AEB, and which "predominantly target their provision at the most disadvantaged in society".

They are Fircroft College in Birmingham, Hillcroft College, which now part of Richmond and Hillcroft Adult and Community College in London, Northern College in Barnsley, and

Ruskin College in Oxfordshire. This will be "to aid their transition to

devolution/delegation given their specialist nature and reliance on AEB", according to a government spokesperson.

Traineeships for 19- to 24-year-olds will meanwhile "remain a nationally funded programme" with allocations provided by ESFA, regardless of where trainees live.

But providers were advised to prepare for widespread handover of responsibility from local to central government.

"Providers who wish to deliver AEB provision, post devolution/delegation, in one or more of the mayoral combined authorities and Greater London Authority areas should start to build, if they have not already done so, effective working relationships with the relevant authority," the spokesperson said.

The "final AEB to be devolved" to the mayoral combined authorities and delegate the AEB to Greater London Authority for

the 2019/20 funding year "is expected in early 2019", once "the functions necessary for the delivery of adult education have been transferred" and the AEB budget for that year has been finalised.

Last November, the government used its industrial strategy white paper to announce it would devolve AEB "to mayoral areas in 2019".

This actually amounts to a delay: the Skills Funding Agency previously planned to devolve seven regions' AEB budgets from August 2018, and only London was to join in a year later.

There has been a general lack of information on how devolution will work in practice. FE Week reported in February that the regional mayors had met the DfE to "voice concerns" on the process.

Among their issues was the lack of influence they would have over the budgets,

and not enough funding during the transition vear. as well as "challenging" timescales for the handover of power. The transition year is set for 2018/19. Seven combined authorities have signed devolution deals alongside

London to take

- control of AEB
- spending in their regions, and the

newly announced North of Tyne combined authority is expected to do the same.

Sheffield will elect a mayor in May. The other combined authorities which will be receiving devolved AEB budgets are Greater Manchester, West Midlands, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, West of England, Tees Valley, and Liverpool.

The government has also issued "illustrative" AEB allocations for 2018/19 to the combine authorities.

"These illustrative budgets give the metropolitan combined authorities and the Greater London Authority an indication of the AEB they can expect to receive in the funding vear 2019 to 2020." the spokesperson said.

"The budgets are based on 2016 to 2017 actual grant delivery and assumed 2017 to 2018 independent learning providers' delivery to learners resident in MCAs/GLA areas."

A map of the combined authorities preparing for AEB devolution in England

KEY

- A Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- **B** Greater London Authority
- C Greater Manchester
- **D** North of Tyne
- E Liverpool City Region
- F Sheffield City Region
- **G** Tees Vallev
- H West of England
- I West Midlands
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Merger bulletin: The coll

FE WEEK

JUDE BURKE

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The area reviews of post-16 education and training ended last March. They were designed to establish "fewer, often larger, more resilient and efficient providers", but one year on from that final meeting of the steering group, there are more than a few financially challenged still struggling to find merger partners. FE Week looked at what's going on at the colleges in need of rescuing.

t's always the ones in the direst straights: a college whose very survival is reliant on government bailouts and another that was told a year ago it could no longer survive on its own are among those desperately seeking new merger partners.

Accrington and Rossendale College came out of the Lancashire area review in February last year told to merge with Burnley College by May 1.

But the plan fell through, and it has since then depended on the largesse of the Education and Skills Funding Agency while it desperately searches for a new partner.

Epping Forest College is also now on its second merger hunt, after the FE commissioner told it a year ago that it was no longer sustainable on its own.

One of the conditions of its financial notice to improve, issued in December after it was rated 'inadequate' for financial health, was that it merge by the start of this August.

Other colleges in search of a partner include Guildford College, which was recently told it needed to merge after its second FE commissioner intervention.

Kirklees College, waiting for intervention after it received a financial notice to improve in November, may also have to go down the same route.

In fact, merger is generally seen as the best and only option for a college whose financials are in a twist.

For many – particularly for those whose review-recommended merger has fallen through, or which have come into trouble since the reviews ended – it entails a structure and prospects appraisal (SPA) led by that man again, the FE commissioner Richard Atkins.

In an interview with

FE Week in November, he described his process as a "much more meaningful way" for a college to find a partner than the area reviews ever were.

The difference is "the focus it brings on an individual college", which "tends to lead to meaningful mergers".

He's putting his money where his mouth is, too: this week he said he's working "around the country with a number of

colleges" to find merger partners. "The purpose of the area reviews was

"The purpose of the area reviews was to create larger, more sustainable, more successful colleges, and the process we're currently

going through with the SPAs supports that policy," he told FE Week. Several colleges

Richard Atkins

Accrington and Rossendale College: Eternal financial support

Accrington and Rossendale College is reliant on ESFA bailouts while it searches for a new merger partner, after the collapse of its plan to join forces with Burnley College last year.

According to its 2016/17 accounts, the college received "loan funding of £1,921,000" during the year, "bringing total exceptional financial support to £2,247,000".

It had also "received a commitment from the Education and Skills Funding Agency that they will provide a further £1,228,000 of funding in the period to March 2018".

The college was rated 'good' by Ofsted at its most recent inspection in January, but it's 'inadequate' for financial health.

This it blames on "historic low levels of cash reserves, declining recruitment,

in particular that relating to 16- to 18-year-olds, and relatively high levels of borrowing". In addition to

a financial notice of concern from November 2015 and its dependence on EFS, the college had also breached the covenants on its bank loans in 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Accrington and Rossendale came out of the Lancashire area review told to merge with Burnley College by May 2017, but this plan never came to fruition.

The college is now led by an interim principal, Lynda Mason, who was appointed after the college's former principal Sue Taylor stepped down in preparation for the merger that wasn't.

It's now "actively pursuing a merger with the support of the FE commissioner" through a structure and prospects appraisal, intending to "enter into an agreement to merge in 2017/18".

A spokesperson for the college told FE Week that it's "exploring a range of options that will enable us to build on our inspection success".

"A final decision will be based on a clear and coherent curriculum vision that will meet local needs, backed by an investment and resource plan which secures financial security for the long term."



Epping Forest: Four notices and an 'inadequate'

Epping Forest College was told by the FE commissioner a year ago that it could not survive on its own – but is now on its second search for a partner.

The college has three notices of concern and a financial notice to improve from the ESFA, and is currently rated 'inadequate' by Ofsted.

Mr Atkins and his team visited for the first time in January last year, because Ofsted had awarded it an across-the-board grade four after an inspection the previous November.

That intervention led placed it into 'administered' status, as a result of "emerging financial challenges" and "serious governance problems".

This was followed by a structure and prospects appraisal "owing to the significant instability still facing the college".

The college's 2016/17 accounts reveal that the process concluded with a firm recommendation that the college merge: "its prospect as an independent corporation was not sustainable".

There's no mention in the accounts of the college having to resort to exceptional financial support from the ESFA, or of a restructuring facility application.

Three of the college's notices of concern date from early last year.

The first, for inspection, was issued

January 9, and the second and third arrived in March, for 'administered' status and for its apprenticeship minimum standards. The fourth notice, for financial health, was

issued in December after the college was rated 'inadequate' for its financial health in 2016/17. It ruled that the college must agree a plan to "achieve a merger by August 1".

So last July the college duly announced a formal partnership with Barnet and Southgate College.

But while the two said they intended to "strategically collaborate", there was no mention in the joint announcement of a proposed merger.

However, a spokesperson told FE Week that while they had intended to merge, the two boards had "decided not to pursue" this option in the autumn.

She gave no reason why.

"Epping Forest College is working with FE commissioner team to choose a new merger partner," she continued.

But with just four months to go until the merger deadline and no new partner announced, it's not clear whether it will be met – nor what will happen to the college if it isn't.

However, the spokesperson insisted college authorities are "confident" it would find a new partner in time.



eges in need of a partner

have indeed managed to pull themselves back from the brink after Mr Atkins helped them track down a merger partner.

Last month Stratford-upon-Avon College, which he had told last March to merge in order to survive, joined forces with Solihull College.

And Lambeth College has this week reaffirmed plans to meld with London South Bank University's "family" of institutions, after going through a SPA to fully assess its options.

Monica Box, Lambeth's principal, said the move "heralds the beginning of an exciting new era for Lambeth College", which had also relied on ESFA handouts, including a reported £25 million from a fund designed for colleges to implement post-area review changes.

In August 15 mergers involving 31 colleges and sixth-form colleges went live on a single day – five of which were financially weak, according to the Association of Colleges.

These included a partnership between debt-ridden Central Sussex College, which was £36.9 million in the red according to its 2016/17 accounts, and Chichester College, which Ofsted rates 'outstanding'.

However, the AoC is not totally happy with the status quo. It warned in its spring statement on college finances this month that the financial health of the sector had

| College | Financial health notice? | Date of notice | Merger partner (if known) | Date of merger (if known) |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Sussex Downs College | Yes | 13/11/2017 | Sussex Coast College | 29/03/2018 |
| Stockport College | Yes | 01/12/2010 | Trafford College | ? |
| Bracknell and Wokingham College | Yes | 26/09/2012 | Activate Learning | 01/08/2018 |
| Redcar and Cleveland College | Yes | 30/03/2015 | Stockton Riverside College | 01/08/2018 |
| North Shropshire College | Yes | 30/01/2015 | Herefordshire and Ludlow College | 01/08/2018 |
| Lambeth College | Yes | 28/06/2013 | LSBU | ? |
| Accrington and Rossendale College | Yes | 23/11/2015 | ? | ? |
| Epping Forest College | Yes | 18/12/2017 | ? | ? |
| Guildford College | Yes | 21/03/2014 | ? | ? |
| Kirklees College | Yes | 07/11/2017 | ? | ? |
| Bradford College | Yes | 30/10/2017 | No plans to merge | |
| Barnfield College | Yes | 07/12/2017 | No plans to merge | |
| PROCAT | Yes | 30/01/2018 | No plans to merge | |
| deterioreted in the next six months | ; of woning | | turned off | |

deteriorated in the past six months.

While "some financially weak colleges have merged with stronger counterparts", a further 35 still hold financial notices of

various kinds. There has been a recent flurry: nine have

been handed out to eight colleges since November.

But despite the AoC's warnings, Mr Atkins insisted the sector's ability to take on and

support struggling colleges shows no signs

i of waning.

"At present, every one of the structure and prospects appraisals is bringing forward colleges that would wish to merge with them," he said.

The clock is ticking for cash-strapped colleges without a partner, however.

The insolvency regime, which will allow colleges to go bust for the first time, will be introduced later this year – at which point the exceptional financial support tap will be turned off.

And funding from the restructuring facility, which many colleges have been drawing on both to cover the costs of mergers and for longer-term sustainability, is only available until next March.

The structure and prospects appraisal process can continue "as long as the restructuring fund exists", Mr Atkins claimed.

"After that it's a policy decision."

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AAC2018 - DAY ONE

Provider register won't reopen until September at least

BILLY CAMDEN @BILLYCAMDEN

he register of apprenticeship training providers will not open again until September – nearly a year after the last window closed, the government has revealed.

The register has been under review since November, but Rory Kennedy, the Department for Education's director of apprenticeships, admitted to general surprise at FE Week's Annual Apprenticeship Conference that it was still in its "early stages".

"We expect to complete the review in the summer and the register will open again in September," he told delegates. "The work in that review is still in its early stages."

He admitted he was "very hesitant" to give a "flavour" of some of the outcomes of the review, though he said the DfE would "welcome views on" whether the window approach is the "right one" or "should we be talking about a rolling approval basis".

This is nevertheless the first indication of when new applications can be made; officials have been silent since the last window in October, even though 13 organisations were unexpectedly added earlier this month.

These newcomers bring the total number

of providers on the register to 2,588 – 2,197 of which are eligible for an Ofsted visit – a volume that chief inspector Amanda Spielman admitted said she is "worried" about.

Mr Kennedy told AAC that the new register was created to put "quality at the core of the system".

However, RoATP has been controversial since its launch: many established providers failed to make it onto the approved list the first time round, including every single one of Birmingham's colleges.

Amongst the successful providers, however, were three new companies with no track record on government apprenticeships, all run by one man from a rented office in Cheshire. Another admitted training academy had ceased trading by the time the register was published.

Mr Kennedy is confident the government will meet its target for three million apprenticeships starts by 2020.

Kirsty Wark, who hosted AAC, asked him about the ongoing drop in starts this year, and whether it was down to an "implementation blip".

"Calling it an implementation blip might be a bit too blasé," Mr Kennedy said. "We are concerned about it but we remain confident. I don't think there is a fundamental issue with



the way apprenticeship reforms have been implemented but what I would accept is that we need to balance that commitment with longer term measures.

"We need to articulate them to better reflect the programme. The number of people starting apprenticeships shouldn't be the programme's only measure of success." He also told delegates that the

apprenticeship reform programme would only succeed through a "real collaborative effort".

"It requires all of us: government,

employers, apprentices, awarding bodies, providers, and colleges to keep remembering what we're working towards," he said.

"We're working for a new system where apprenticeships will provide high-quality skills, technical experience, industry know-how, and transferable skills that give employers and apprentices and indeed our country a real competitive advantage.

"Our pipeline of talent will lift growth and improve social mobility by creating more opportunities for people in all communities regardless of their background."

Berragan: 'Apprenticeship reform programme IS delivering results'

JUDE BURKE @JUDEBURKE77

The boss of the Institute for Apprenticeships has attempted to defend the apprenticeship reforms in his first major speech to the sector.

Highest on Sir Gerry Berragan's agenda was the plummet in starts recorded over the past year.

He admitted that while starts are indeed down, the drop is now closer to "about 30 per cent" – rather than the 60-per-cent fall recorded at one point.

Beyond this "headline figure", he claimed, there is evidence of the "government's strategy to raise the quality bar.

This includes a move away from frameworks towards standards, and a much wider range of levels, he insisted. Starts on standards are ere "currently running at 800 per cent up on the previous year".

These now represent 40 per cent of all starts, up from three per cent a year ago.

"Despite the headline drop in starts seeming negative, when you look beneath the headline what you see is a reform programme that's delivering on its objective," he said.

He also took issue with the widespread belief in the sector that it's too difficult to get a standard approved. Again, he acknowledged there are "some elements of truth" to this, and that it is "clear that we needed to speed the process up and make it easier for trailblazers".

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When you look beneath the headline drop in starts, what you see is a reform programme that's delivering on its objective

The IfA now wants 80 per cent of all new standards "to be approved in eight months of first proposal coming forward", he said. A total of 244 standards are currently ready for delivery.

"By the end of this year I predict we will have a total of over 350 standards approved for delivery and that figure will probably rise

to around 500 by 2020".

He also argued against the idea that the IfA had "relaxed its policy" on qualifications in apprenticeships.

This "much-hyped change" was more of a "refinement", Sir Gerry claimed. More "purely off-the-job qualifications" are now allowed, but there has been a "tightening up on the on-the-job NVQ type qualifications".

"These latter duplicate the end-point assessment and add excessive cost. The former don't do either," he said. End-point assessment was Sir Gerry's

fourth bone of contention. Once again, he admitted that there are some standards which do not yet have an end-point assessor in place, these are few in number.

"The vast majority of these standards either have no learners on them at this stage or are longer standards where the EPA is several years in the future," he said.

98.6 per cent of apprentices are on standards with at least one EPA organisation in place, he suggested, a proportion which rises to 99.1 per cent of apprentices due to complete within the next 12 months. There is a "very small number" of apprentices on "eight standards" who are due to finish their courses in the next 12 months

without anyone to deliver the final exams. "In each case the Education and Skills

 The set of th

Funding Agency and the Institute are working with prospective assessment organisations to resolve this. So we're on the case," he said.

Sir Gerry also challenged some in the sector, who want to ensure no-one is allowed to start an apprenticeship without at least one EPA organisation in place.

There will "always be newly approved longer standards" with no EPA in place, as assessment organisations "don't want to invest in the development of EPA materials several years before they're used".

AAC2018 - DAY TWO

Ofsted to 'expose' rip-off subcontracting

BILLY CAMDEN @BILLYCAMDEN

FROM FRONT

fsted will expose training providers who rip off apprentices by collecting subcontracting management fees without taking "responsibility for quality", the chief inspector has revealed.

Amanda Spielman made the promise in a fierce speech at FE Week's Annual Apprenticeship Conference, warning prime providers that the inspectorate would not stand idly by while poor provision goes unmonitored.

"Our message here is simple: as the direct contract holder, you are responsible for your learners," she told delegates.

"If you subcontract, for whatever reason, you are still responsible for making sure your apprentice gets high-quality training.

"If you are sitting back and collecting the money without taking proper responsibility for quality, you are failing your apprentices. We are determined to expose this in the system.'

Ofsted is preparing to publish its first monitoring visits looking specifically at subcontracted provision of directly funded providers.

"We expect the first of these to be published in the next couple of weeks," Ms Spielman said

Subcontracting has been a hot topic for all in the sector over the past few years. Lead providers often claim that steep fees



Amanda Spielman

are needed to cover administrative costs, but many, including the education committee chair Robert Halfon, believe that too much money is being siphoned out of frontline learning.

Some management fees have reached up to 40 per cent. as was infamously the case with Learndirect, the largest provider in the country.

Mr Halfon claimed that subcontracting had become a "money-maker" during an education select committee earlier this month.

Ms Spielman also discussed Ofsted's approach to monitoring "untested"

new providers which have entered the

apprenticeships market.

"I know that many of you have concerns about the number of untested providers entering the market and the effect this could have on quality," she said. "Well, rest assured we are not standing idly by and waiting for new providers to fail.

"It is essential that poor-quality provision is spotted and tackled quickly, so that it doesn't damage an individual's prospects or the overall apprenticeship brand."

She mentioned the early monitoring visits that have been used to assess the quality of these new providers, the first of which was published last week - and made for embarrassing reading for bosses at Key6 Group

Inspectors described the Merseysideprovider as "not fit for purpose", where apprentices complained they are "not learning anything new

The report was so dire that the skills minister Anne Milton intervened personally to prevent the provider from taking on any new apprentices.

However, Ms Spielman insisted that a single report should not be taken as a sign that every new provider is similarly inept.

"It is important that we don't over-interpret this one result as a judgment on all new providers coming on stream with the levy," she told the conference.

"We are doing more monitoring visits of this type. And I very much hope that positive results will significantly outnumber the disappointments."

Marsden: Labour would devolve apprenticeships funding too

BILLY CAMDEN @BILLYCAMDEN

abour's proposed National Education Service would devolve apprenticeships and other skills funding, and not just the adult education budget, the shadow skills minister has said.

Gordon Marsden told the AAC that full devolution of FE is "the way forward in terms of community growth and cohesion", in his keynote speech on the second day of the conference.

"Tentative progress in the devolution of adult skills funding is here now – but we need a much bigger debate about the devolution of broader apprenticeship and skills funding," he said.

"Place and sector are always critical factors in supply and demand, and the creative tension between them is often best explored and resolved in these places and sectors, not just in Whitehall."

Speaking to FE Week after his speech, Mr Marsden said the "reality" is that if "you want a proper economic plan across an area, just looking at devolving the adult skills budget and not to consider the broader issue around apprenticeships is pretty daft in the medium to long term".

He added that devolution is also about changing "culture" so that people actually working on these issues can do so "collaboratively locally" rather than "simply being the sort of slightly hapless instruments of a Willy Wonka chocolate factory that is proceeding down Whitehall".

Labour's planned NES, he said, would "turbocharge collaboration between employers, providers and other stakeholders - FE and HE - in the local economies and travel to work areas where they operate".

"That demands an ever-giving virtuous circle of co-operation not the traditional top down micro management of Whitehall." he continued.

"Government is an enabler not dictator. Apprenticeships as a natural fit to supply - and demand - not an arbitrary figure dreamt up for a press release.'



20% off-the-job rule divides opinion once again

JUDE BURKE @JUDEBURKE77

he director of the National Apprenticeships Service has mounted

a strident defence of the controversial 20-per-cent off-the-job training requirement. "The 20 per cent remains, absolutely,"

declared Sue Husband in response to a barrage of questions from presenter Kirstv Wark (pictured) and members of the audience at FE Week's Annual Apprenticeships Conference.

But she promised the government would "listen to what's working, what the challenges are and continue to review how the reforms are working".

Ms Husband recognised that "a lot of ambitious apprentices will choose to do extra work outside of their work time" but that they shouldn't be expected to do so.

"I think they need that support within the workplace," she said.

The NAS director stepped in as a lastminute replacement for the skills minister Anne Milton due to illness. Her wide-ranging speech touched on many aspects of the reform programme.

These included National Apprenticeship Week, the benefits of apprenticeships to employers and individuals, the introduction of the levy, and measures designed to increase 🗄 be pushed on some of the more vulnerable apprentice recruitment in small- and medium-sized enterprises.

The 20-per-cent rule was a burning topic at this year's conference, following an FE Week survey earlier this month in which it emerged as what the sector considers as the single biggest barrier to apprenticeship recruitment.

In his keynote address on the first day of the conference, Mark Dawe, the boss of the Association of Employment Learning Providers, said that out-of-hours learning should count towards the requirement.

If an apprentice is keen to study out of hours, and the employer and provider both agree to it, "why are we stopping them from doing that if they're getting the knowledge skills and behaviour they need to get the apprenticeship?" he asked.

Speaking exclusively to FE Week, AoC's chief executive David Hughes said the rule is "essential" and "a good place to be at the moment".

However, he disagreed with his AELP

counterpart on out-ofhours training. "I worry it could

apprentices, perhaps at level two where they don't know any better,"

he said Emily Chapman, the National Union for Students' vicepresident for FE, said she was a "big fan" of the 20-per-cent rule – as are apprentices, she said. "It allows time for education to

> be thoughtful, apprentice-centred and relevant", she said.



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12 **J**@FEWEEK

t's always nice to be at a big conference

with people passionate about learning,

FE Week Apprenticeship Conference at

the ICC brings together a vital part of the

education system: independent training providers, colleges, universities, awarding organisations, students and employers.

skills, training and apprenticeships. The

The diversity of the audience is part of its

here wants make sure that the apprenticeship

strength particularly given that everyone

improves productivity, enhances economic

development, helps employers be successful

and gives people real career opportunities Back in 2011, when I was leading NIACE

(now the Learning and Work Institute), we ran an inquiry with AoC and 157 Group (now

Collab) chaired by Margaret Sharp, called

The report set out a simple but compelling

vision to place colleges at the centre of the

education system, working in partnership

authorities and public-sector organisations.

The college role was described as the "the

dynamic nucleus" supporting and working

local authorities, universities and schools.

The report is still worth reading because

unfortunately the years of austerity since

with local businesses, charities, local

with independent training providers,

then have got in the way of properly

implementing this vision, as has the

'Colleges at the heart of their communities'.

programme advances social mobility,

DAVID HUGHES

Chief executive, The Association of Colleges

AAC shows we need a diverse provider market

competition for scarce resources.

It's vital that colleges can confidently assert what they are good at. However, they must also acknowledge, applaud and promote the distinct, vital and complementary roles played by school sixth-forms, independent training providers, local-authority adult education services, other colleges and universities.

As I visit AoC members around the country I see time and again, mutually beneficial partnerships between colleges and others. In every case, success is dependent on clarity of purpose and outcomes with clear benefits to the learners, students, apprentices and employers. Meeting their needs often requires more than the college can do on its own, and every community needs a range of organisations to meet its needs.

Schools work with colleges to make the transition to post-16 learning smoother through careers guidance and taster days, and collaborate to ensure a wide curriculum offering to all young people. Independent training providers subcontract or partner to meet the complete spread of needs for employers and the local or national labour market. Adult-education services develop outreach and progression pathways into college courses. Universities validate higher education and support students to move on from levels four and five into degree studies. Partnerships are not of course the

Every community needs a range of organisations to meet its needs

only thing happening between this set of organisations – in many cases, colleges sponsor academy schools and UTCs, bring training providers into the overall college group, manage the adult-education services directly and collaborate with universities on joint ventures.

We can agree or not about whether colleges are the "dynamic nucleus" – though as chief executive of the AoC, it won't be difficult to work out my view on that one – but I am certain that we can agree that we need a range of different organisations to be effective in every community to have the lifelong learning culture we're all striving for.







FEWEEK.CO.UK

AAC2018 - AWARDS EVENING

Inaugural AAC Awards: Worthy winners step up

PAUL OFFORD @Paulofford

he nation's best training providers, employers and apprentices have been enshrined at the inaugural Annual Apprenticeship Awards at a glitzy gala dinner.

The ceremony, attended by 500 people, was one of the highlights of this year's AAC conference in Birmingham.

The full slate of winners are listed below, and Shane Mann, the managing director of LSect, the body that runs both FE Week and the awards, was full of praise for everyone who entered.

"I would like to say a huge congratulations to all of our winners," he said. "Each is a tremendous example of the outstanding work those within the apprenticeship sector contribute. They truly deserve the recognition," he said.

"We were stunned by the number of



Promoting Apprenticeships Campaign of the Year – Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group

NSCG's application covered both their annual apprenticeships marketing campaign plan and promotion activity for National Apprenticeship Week.

The judges said: "They demonstrated a planned and effectively carried out a campaign, showing how teams had worked together to deliver, providing evidence of apprenticeship achievement above the national average, with data showing high rates of positive outcomes. Their activity covered a range of media, events and recruitment activity."



Apprenticeship Provider of the Year: Business and Administrative – DBC Training

This provider stood out because of its special efforts to work in partnership with every customer.

"It demonstrated high employer-satisfaction scores, timely achievement rates and high levels of learner satisfaction," the judges said of Derbybased DBC Training.

It designs all its apprenticeship programmes with the employer, learners and parent or carer in mind, and "continually monitors feedback throughout the programmes". applications we received this year and will now commence preparations for the 2019 awards."

Former skills minister Robert Halfon, who is now chair of the Commons education select committee, took home this year's 'Special recognition' award.

"He fully deserves this," said Mr Mann. "He has been a staunch supporter of apprenticeships before and throughout his time as skills minister, and has continued to fight their corner as chair of the education select committee."

FE Week and our award partners AELP announced the shortlists in association with CMI in February. The regional winners were announced last month in Parliament.

"The future for apprenticeships is bright and the awards this year and beyond illustrate why apprenticeships have become the country's flagship skills programme and why other countries are now tapping into UK expertise and experience to build their own programmes," said AELP boss Mark Dawe.



Outstanding Contribution to the Development of Apprenticeships (employer or provider) – Learning Curve Group

This award went to Learning Curve in recognition of its "all-encompassing" support for the roll-out of the apprenticeship levy from April last year. Their entry stressed the importance of

"investment, insight and innovation".

"IT demonstrated a partnership relationship with employers to support it with the introduction of the levy, but also continuing those relationships beyond the levy, where apprenticeships were not the right avenue," the judges said.





Apprenticeship Provider of the year – Gen2

Cumbria-based Gen2, part of the City & Guilds Group, was praised for commitment to apprenticeships across its whole business.

"They provided data that demonstrated the quality of their provision, including through the employer satisfaction survey, which gave high scores, significantly above national average," the judges said.

"Timely success rates are consistently high and in 2016/17, 94 per cent of apprentice learners had a positive destination outcome."



Apprenticeship Provider of the Year: Digital – Firebrand Training

The London provider was credited for impressive skills training in support of the UK's digital sector. Firebrand is "dedicated to delivering apprenticeship training to small, medium and large enterprises".

"The provider boasts 87- to 92-per-cent achievement rates for apprenticeship frameworks and a 95-per-cent retention rate for trailblazer apprenticeships, paying testament to high-quality delivery provided throughout the duration of an apprenticeship," judges said.



Outstanding Contribution to the Development of Apprenticeships (individual) – Phil White

Phil White was recognised for years of dedication to apprenticeships culminating in his role in the development of new employer-led training programmes. He started with United Utilities in 1997 as a mechanical engineer apprentice, and worked his way up to head of learning and development.

The judges recognised that trailblazer apprenticeship standards "for water process technician and utilities engineering technician were only ready for delivery thanks to his unique, sustained input".



Apprentice Employer of the Year – Clarkson Evans

Gloucester's electrical specialists Clarkson Evans employs over 230 apprentices, which were recognised for being "the lifeblood" of the company.

"They demonstrated how they have been extending apprenticeship opportunities, broadening the range of subjects over the last two years," the judges said.

Their training programme was actively developed "to support business growth". It provides "exceptional support services" to learners.



Apprenticeship Provider of the Year: Engineering & Manufacturing – Babcock Skills Development & Training

The judges were impressed with Babcock's "exceptional" success rates and commitment to diversity.

"Success rates are exceptional, 95 per cent timely success for 2016-17, with the bespoke technical solution delivering work-ready year three apprentices to their workplace," they said.

Impressive dedication to increasing diversity was also demonstrated, while its approach to training is "an extension of the employer's place of work, inducting the apprentices into a work ready ethos".



Apprenticeship Provider of the Year: Construction – Construction Industry Training Board

CITB was recognised for its unwavering commitment to employers.

It designs its apprenticeships programmes "specifically to enable the construction industry to be as efficient and effective as possible".

"We are relentless in our efforts to improve learner retention and success rates and have sector leading achievement rates across nations," it wrote in its entry.

Judges also recognised its "well-developed recruitment and selection strategy for learners".

FE WEEK

EDITORIAL

Get on with off-the-job

It is very clear that many apprenticeship providers are struggling to persuade employers to buy into the new 20-per-cent offthe-job training rule.

So it comes as no surprise that it has been a hot topic this week at FE Week's Annual Apprenticeship Conference, where many still single it out as the main barrier to greater employer engagement.

Sue Husband from the government's national apprenticeship service was clear during her question and answer session (page 9) that significant training is central to quality apprenticeships. We don't want to return to low-paid apprentices not even knowing they are on a training course.

Like Ofsted, I think providers and employers need to publicly embrace the training requirement as an "entitlement" to the apprentice: make it a selling point rather than a sticking point.

Otherwise, will employer demand pick up enough to achieve the three million starts target?

It felt very appropriate to include a presentation at AAC from a futurologist, but truth be told, nobody really knows how the reforms will unfold.

Official figures since May last year clearly show a major dip in demand, but I remain optimistic.

Many more large employers, particularly in the public sector, will, I believe, recruit new and existing employees as apprentices in significant volume as new standards finally come on stream

> Nick Linford, Editor news@feweek.co.uk

AAC2018 TWEETS:

Bryony Kingsland

to a career, not specific job role #NUS @EmilyChapman. Couldn't agree more

Excellent first day at #FEWEEKAAC18 Highlights for me were sessions on social mobility and implementing degree apprenticeships, plus excellent plenaries. Looking forward to tomorrow and asking exhibitors my list of questions!

Paul Eeles

@PaulEeles

The issues with EQA and the quality of apprenticeships highlighted by @AELPUK Mark Dawe, completely agree and @awardingbodie stands shoulder to shoulder with AELP on the need to sort this out as a matter of urgency #FEWeekAAC18

Charlotte Bosworth @md_innovate

Negotiating prices without a full understanding of the cost of delivery is going to drive down quality - fact #FEWeekAAC18



Ofsted appears to back colleges in Progress 8 battle

BILLY CAMDEN @BILLYCAMDEN

• he credibility of a major new government progress measure is a stake after a college labelled as one of the worst in the country for teaching 14- to 16-year-olds has been rated 'outstanding' for its provision by Ofsted.

The watchdog couldn't praise Leeds City College highly enough for its "direct entry" provision in a report published on March 16.

Students make "excellent progress from their starting point" - even though many are from "very challenging backgrounds that are characterised by an episodic experience of education".

And now, voices from across the sector are redoubling their efforts to get colleges and other providers exempted from the government's flagship Progress 8 measure - which they say is unrepresentative of the work their do with children in the 14-to-16 bracket.

The measure looks at the progress a pupil has made between the end of primary school and the results of eight GCSEs, comparing their achievement with other students of similar ability.

The Association of Colleges say it is unfair to publish colleges' results next to those of schools. FE providers only recruit their key stage 4 students in year 10, and thus only have responsibility over their learners for two of the five years that Progress 8 measures Direct entry at colleges also mostly caters

for young people who have not thrived in a mainstream school setting.

The latest Progress 8 data set, published in January, showed that the 17 colleges which offered direct entry last year scored -2.10 on average, well below the government's floor standard of -0.5, and by far the lowest of any type of educational institution.

The national media subsequently ran stories listing "the worst schools in the country", in which colleges such as Leeds City - which received a score of -2.02 - were included.

"We do not dispute its value to students in schools," Lewis Freer, the head of the 14+ apprenticeship academy at Leeds City College, told FE Week.

"However, for those who require a more bespoke approach, such a measure fails to capture the real development these young people need."

He added that while league tables "may not recognise the positive impact we make, it is reassuring to know that Ofsted certainly does".

The college was rated 'good' overall but 'outstanding' in three headline fields, including for its direct entry provision. Inspectors found that every one of its 172 full-time 14- to 16-year-old students, who have a "record of low prior attainment and poor attendance", made "excellent progress" onto further education and training.

"Students follow an engaging curriculum that meets the statutory requirements for key stage 4, combining the study of core GCSE subjects alongside vocational qualifications," the report states.

Inspectors added that staff are "highly qualified and experienced" to deliver the range of qualifications they offer.

They provide "intensive and effective levels of pastoral support to students, some of whom are from very challenging backgrounds that are characterised by an episodic experience of education".

Mr Freer said that by keeping class sizes down and "focusing on the individual needs" of learners "we are better able to identify and overcome the many barriers to learning these young people experience" at school.

Progress 8 was established by the Department for Education in 2016.

Schools are judged against the measure every year, and are considered to be below the floor standard if their pupils' average score in a complex points system comes in at -0.5 or under in eight GCSEs.

FE Week revealed in February that two huge colleges – London South East and NCG – have ditched their own 14-to-16 provision because they say the "unfair" measure is too damaging to their reputation.

First early Ofsted monitoring visit to apprenticeship newcomer warns training 'not fit for purpose'

This is a clear example of people underestimating the vast resources and professional delivery required when offering apprenticeships. We are not, as it often seems, the poor relations of education, we are highly dedicated work-based vocational teachers providing high-quality education, training and assessment across a range of occupational subjects, with achievement rates that are unmatched in other sectors of education.

Don't enter our market place if you can't do the same!

Noel Johnson

DfE backs HMRC's crackdown on VAT in subcontracting

We have had two VAT inspections, one in 2011 and one in 2015. neither of them picked up that VAT was not being charged on subcontracting fees - who is at fault here, us or them? They inspected us and said what we were doing was correct. Have we now got a claim against the VAT man, plus can we now claim back all of the VAT we were partially exempt from, and also claim back against the VAT we paid on the learning loans of which some are being let off? The VAT man may end up owing us and other providers more than we owe them.

IfA 'concerns' revealed over quality assurance conflict of interest

I'm bemused as why there should be a choice of EQA. It's a bit like being given a choice of regulatory body.

David Watson

Mike Farmer

@BryonyKingsland #FEWeekAAC18-apprenticeships should lead

karen hinton

@karenannehinton

COMMENTS

CEO/PRINCIPAL

Salary: CIRCA £125,000

Coleg Sir Går and Coleg Ceredigion operate as the College of Choice for learners in South West and Mid Wales with a strong bilingual ethos. We offer Further Education, Work Based Learning and Higher Education across seven campuses in the counties of Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion. At all times we put our learners first and our code of excellence is at the heart of all we do.

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Trafford College Group - New Group - New Opportunities - A Great Place to Work



Assistant Principals- Altrincham and Stretford/Stockport

Competitive Salary

You will have overall leadership responsibility for a campus as well as responsibility for a number of sector areas across the Group. We are looking for innovative and inspirational candidates who can drive growth whilst ensuring continuous improvement in the quality of provision. Successful candidates will have a proven track record of ensuring delivery of high standards of teaching, learning and assessment; developing innovative models of curriculum that meet the needs of all users through effective planning and implementation; achieving consistently high levels of outcomes for learners; and maximising income and recruitment targets whilst ensuring efficient management of resources.

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Competitive Salary

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EASTLEIGH

🄰 @FEWEEK

Assistant Principal

Salary: £45,128 - £60,670 per annum Hours: 37 Hours per week / 52 weeks per year

We are looking for an outstanding person to join the senior leadership team and create greater capacity to drive rapid improvement and increase business development. You will be an effective leader who will successfully motivate and inspire individuals and teams to deliver a responsive, innovative and efficient curriculum.

You will form an Assistant Principal team of three and the detailed structure document outlines how curriculum and cross College responsibilities are planned to be delegated. As an Assistant Principal, you will uphold professional internal and external networking and engagement with key stakeholders and partners in order to promote and further enhance the reputation of the College locally, regionally and nationally.

You will be expected to lead on quality improvement initiatives within the curriculum areas you are responsible for and positively contribute to the ongoing cross college teaching and learning developments and other quality improvement activities. You will be committed to the continuing development and succession of the Programme Area managers for whom you are responsible, whilst also leading cross College areas of responsibility.

Eastleigh College is more than a place for learning; it is a community. We are a highly successful "Outstanding" Ofsted graded, Further Education College employing approximately 500 staff. We offer a wide variety of technical and professional courses, which gives our learners the specific skills that employers are seeking. This includes a wide variety of full-time courses, parttime professional courses and Apprenticeships.

As an Employer we have a host of people with individual skills and knowledge who play an integral part in making our successes happen.

The closing date for this post is 8th April 2018

Interviews to be held on the 20th April 2018

For further details and an application form, please contact: The Human Resources Department, Eastleigh College on e-mail: recruitment@eastleigh.ac.uk

We pursue a policy of promoting equality and diversity. Applications are particularly welcome from people with disabilities. Eastleigh College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Appointment is subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. If you have not heard from us by 2 weeks after the closing date, please assume your application has been unsuccessful.

MIS Manager



King Edward VI College is seeking to appoint an experienced MIS manager to oversee the college's management information systems. The College has over 2000 students studying academic A levels. Placing our students at the centre of everything we do, our overriding priority is their welfare, development and continuing success.

Position: MIS Manager Location: Stourbridge, West Midlands Contract type: Permanent, full-time Salary: £40,875 to £44,714 per annum

About the role:

King Edward VI College is seeking to appoint an experienced MIS manager to oversee the college's management information systems. This is an exciting role that requires leadership and creativity to build on current successes. The post holder will serve on the college leadership team.

It is an interesting and varied role within a busy office, which is centrally located within the College. The post holder will support the College in its aim to provide the highest quality education and experience for students and staff and to ensure we meet our statutory data requirements. This is an excellent opportunity for anyone wanting to lead registry team, with a desire to innovate in a supportive and encouraging environment.

About You:

The successful candidate will be educated to degree level or have relevant professional qualification and will have significant student data management experience in the education sector and an understanding of the IT systems generally.

Additionally, you will also have experience working with further education proprietary data systems (e.g. Unit-e, ESFA systems, ProAchieve) and experience of establishing, monitoring and improving quality standards and service requirements. You will also need excellent leadership skills, with the ability to lead a team and motivate and inspire staff to achieve high performance levels.

Please visit our website **http://bit.ly/2uaEQHV** for more information on the post and details of how to apply.

Please note that the closing date of the vacancy is midday 9 April 2018

Head of Leadership, Management & Governance £55,000 pa, Permanent



The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) helps ensure that the Further Education and Training sector develops world class leaders, teachers and trainers. We are the Governmentbacked, sector-owned support body for the whole sector and are now looking to appoint an outstanding individual to lead our leadership, management and governance programmes, aimed at improving the standard of the sector.

Our programmes in this area include those for CEOs, Principals and individuals aspiring to these roles. Further activity includes programmes for Chief Financial Officers. As the lead for this area you will be working on exciting projects, including a refresh of our governance offer alongside developing support and training for middle managers and subject leaders.

As a Head, you will lead the day-to-day strategy and operation for your assigned programmes and ensure all new programmes are developed and delivered in accordance with the ETF's commercial models and contribute towards our long-term objective. You will do this by working collaboratively with colleagues across the ETF and manage associates and programme assessors to ensure the most efficient and effective ways to secure the ETF's overall aims.

We encourage applications from those who have a strong and broad understanding of the FE and training sector. You will be ambitious and have had previous experience of managing and building programmes of work, be that project activity or learning programmes.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate the following essential requirements:

- Experience of working in the Further Education (FE) and training sector in a leader, manager or governance role
- Highly self-motivated and proactive, with excellent interpersonal skills
- Excellent strategic and analytical skills
- Ability to prioritise workload to meet tight deadlines
- Experience of working with credibility across the FE and training sector with government officials/departments
- Ability to build/maintain networks and senior level relationships across the sector
- Ability to assess performance and progress using both quantitative and qualitative information
- Ability to reach decisions and judgments based upon a sound evidence base
- A creative thinker with strong problem-solving skills
- Ability to combine long-term planning and short-term reactive work, and excel in both
 A proven track record of translating creative strategic thinking into practical, deliverable activity
- Strong oral, written and presentation communications skills.

For the full job description and application process, please see www.etfoundation.co.uk/vacancies Closing date noon Monday 9th April

Course Leader – Maths

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Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) recently judged by Ofsted Inspection as "officially good and on our way to outstanding" is the largest local authority adult education service in London and one of the largest in the country. A thriving adult education provider, this college provides an exciting and enriching educational experience for all.

We have a diverse, enthusiastic student community, taught and supported by wellqualified, dedicated staff. Our three main centres in Westminster are all modern, easily accessible and purpose built, offering high quality teaching and learning facilities.

We offer staff a package of employment benefits including a public sector pension scheme, generous holiday allowance and opportunities for Continuous Professional Development.

A well-qualified, ambitious and dynamic graduate teacher of mathematics is required join a highly successful and motivated department.

This is an exciting opportunity for the right candidate to work with well-motivated and intelligent adult learners. The Mathematics department delivers a range of classes across our three sites and through distance learner across all levels from Entry to GCSE. The department achieves admirable results on a routine basis under the leadership of a well-established team of staff and managers. The department achieved 92% 4 - 9 at GCSE in 2017 and has over 300 students taking Mathematics through functional skills or GCSEs.

WAES is moving to teaching GCSE foundation Mathematics to all level two learners from September 2018.

To Apply

A Job description and person specification are on the web site **http://www.waes.ac.uk/vacancies**

Please complete the Application Form and Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form that can also be found on our website and ensure your personal statement reflects the requirements listed in person specification.

Please quote reference number: ED/WAES/795 in all correspondence

Closing date: 12 noon Thursday 29 March 2018

Interviews will be held in week beginning 9 April 2018

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Located in Billingham, SRC Bede Sixth Form represents an important component of the wider college's provision, providing A level, AS level and vocational provision to over 600 learners. With significant opportunities for market growth, the college has strong educational partnerships and excellent higher education links. SRC Bede Sixth Form provides a friendly, supportive environment, within which learners are challenged to succeed.

As an ambitious, driven organisation, we are now looking for an outstanding individual to lead SRC Bede Sixth Form into the next phase of its development. The successful candidate will have a keen strategic awareness, be an excellent ambassador and team player, and will possess a strong drive for improvement, whilst leading a highly committed staff cohort to excel through inspirational leadership.

We have appointed FE Associates to support us with this crucial appointment.

Potential candidates are encouraged to have early confidential discussions with our advisers. This can be arranged through <u>Samantha.Bunn@fea.co.uk</u> who can also be contacted on 01454 617707.

Further details can be obtained from our microsite: https://srcleadership.fea.co.uk

Closing date: Tuesday 3rd April 2018 at noon.

Interview dates: Tuesday 24th and Wednesday 25th April 2018.

<u>FEA</u>





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EXPERTS

ADRIAN ANDERSON Chief executive, UVAC



Will the Institute for Apprenticeships push for numbers rather than quality?

Without proper focus on apprenticeships at the top end, the government will never achieve its ambition to close the skills gap, claims Adrian Anderson

While most of the current apprenticeships headlines have been about the recent falls in starts, there's another issue that's been taxing officials on the side. It's no secret that the DfE and the Institute for Apprenticeships are concerned about the affordability of higher-cost apprenticeships, specifically at higher and degree level.

Do the maths: the government's three million starts commitment means 600,000 per annum. The apprenticeship levy will raise £2.5 billion per annum; divide this by 600,000 and we have just £4,167 to fund each apprenticeship. Having given employers the leadership role, they are focusing on the higher-level and higher-cost apprenticeships their businesses need, rather than the lowerlevel apprenticeships historically funded by the Skills Funding Agency.

As a productivity programme this is excellent news. The problem, of course, is the income raised from the levy will not fund both the 600,000 apprenticeships the government wants and the tougher, pricier ones the economy requires.

Apprenticeships should be a socially mobile route to highlevel technical, professional and managerial roles

So what's the solution? Firstly officials shouldn't panic – we're talking about a medium-term issue and decisions need to be made on the basis of clear evidence. In 2016/17 there were, for example, only around 2,000 degree apprenticeship starts. I anticipate significant growth but it will be some time before affordability becomes an issue. The current IfA priority must be to ensure employers have the standards that their businesses need. There's plenty of work to do here.

Then the IfA must show some backbone.

Put simply, quality must trump quantity. It must base its advice to ministers on the twin policy objectives of apprenticeships: increasing productivity and enhancing social mobility. I am amazed, for example, by arguments to restrict employer spend on management degree apprenticeships. Didn't the industrial strategy suggest that management skills could account for a quarter of the productivity gap between the UK and US? If productivity is a key policy objective, then employers should be allowed to spend significant sums. Apprenticeships should be a socially mobile route to high-level technical, professional and managerial roles.

It will then be time for the IfA to start advising on how the funding system can best be used to deliver high-quality apprenticeships in the longer term.

Two levers that could be changed are the 0.5-per-cent levy contribution and the £3 million threshold for paying the levy. The £3 million threshold could be reduced, but I suspect changes will happen elsewhere first.

If an apprenticeship is doing what it's supposed to do, increasing the productivity and skill base of a business, then by any measure the current non-levy employer coinvestment rate of 10 per cent is generous. It represents a 90 per cent state subsidy for the cost of the apprenticeship. The non-levy employer contribution could be increased to a third. There are also powerful arguments to differentiate an employer's contribution by standard: if we're serious about the link between apprenticeships and productivity, a lower employer contribution could be used for STEM standards. The government's contribution to levy-paying employers' accounts could also be phased out.

There are, however, a few areas where the IfA and government will need to tread very carefully. I think it goes without saying that, given the unacceptable and slow process in the development of standards and approvals, the 24 months employers have to use their levy should not be reduced.

A final no-go area should be meddling with funding bands, which should be based on all costs associated with delivery and assessment – not "affordability" as is increasingly emphasised by both the IfA and the DfE. If the IfA is concerned about affordability, it should suggest using the other levers at the government's disposal to influence employer behaviour. Decent apprenticeships are costly. If the IfA wants to adopt a policy of pushing funding bands down due to "affordability", it will have an adverse impact on the supply of apprenticeships in areas of critical need to the economy. Degree apprenticeships need to be more than a repackage

66 -

Martin Doel believes there can be a place for higher and degree apprenticeships – but they can't be near-exact replicas of regular degrees

followed Apprenticeship Week at a distance this year, and was struck by the emphasis in much of the media coverage on degree apprenticeships. There was also much interest from my hosts in the possibility of introducing degree apprenticeships in Australia.

The focus in the media, in the minds of policymakers and in an international audience is unsurprising. The word "degree" is a highstatus word. It confers value and recognition, offering a means of redressing the perennial problem of inferior regard in vocational and work-based education. In an era of tuition fees it also offers the prospect of earning while learning without incurring a £50k debt. It offers a way forward for apprentices whose work-based learning may hitherto have been capped at level three. And finally, with the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, it offers large employers a way in which they can use their levy contribution on fewer highvalue apprentices without the administrative overhead associated with more numerous (and often younger) apprenticeships at levels two and three. What's not to like?

Well, first there's the title: "degree apprenticeship". I would be much more comfortable with using the title "apprenticeship at degree level", in the way that the skills minister did in her most recent speech on the subject. It would signal that the requirements of the apprenticeship are preeminent, rather than those of the degree.

There are, of course, exceptions, but many of the degree apprenticeships that I have looked at in my new role at IoE would more accurately be described as employer-sponsored degrees. The content in the degrees has not been varied to meet the needs of the employer, and are often simply modularised and delivered to apprentices on a part-time basis. The apprentices start their degrees at the same time as their full-time contemporaries and the course runs on a standard academic year basis. There is limited interplay between the off-the-job teaching provided by lecturers and in the in-work experience of the apprentice, the links such as they are being made by the apprentice rather than being required by the scheme of study. This doesn't mean that such programmes are not useful or good value, but simply that they're not apprenticeships.

Second, there's the level. The OECD, amongst others, has remarked upon the relative absence

of sub-degree work-related higher-level skills provision in England at levels four and five. The review of tertiary education recently announced by the government has, as one of its premises, an acknowledgement of the need to increase this level of provision. While "capturing apprentices on a full three-year journey to a full degree programme may be more attractive to universities, this could amount to no more than a displacement of current degree provision. This would then leave the level of graduate underemployment in the economy unaffected. A more sustainable solution is to have stopping-off points at levels four and five with advancement eventually to level six (degree level) in a progressive higher apprenticeship system.

Many degree apprenticeships would more accurately be described as employersponsored degrees

Finally, some have pointed to the expense of degree apprenticeships compared to entrylevel and intermediate apprenticeships. The higher-level frameworks are funded at up to £27k a go. I can see the concern here with the levy pot being finite, but it's perhaps too early to say if degree apprenticeships, which are still relatively small in number (albeit growing rapidly), will eat the lunches of apprenticeships at levels two and three. The way in which small non-levy paying employers can be incentivised to offer apprenticeships is a much more pressing issue.

So, even in the face of the interest of all and sundry, there are potential pitfalls in degree apprenticeships, the most pressing of which is that they are not apprenticeships at all, but repackaged academic or quasiacademic degrees. If this turns out to be the case, the technical and professional education revolution risks reverting to the norm of academic pre-eminence – and the prospects of a distinctive dual system will once again have been undermined. **EDITION 239**

We talk the talk on ESOL

but we don't back it up

EXPERTS

It's all very well the education secretary waxing lyrical about English as a second language, but without proper funding, migrants have no chance, writes Gordon Marsden

ouise Casey wrote "English language is a common denominator and a strong enabler of integration," in her opportunity and integration review in December 2016.

Damian Hinds recently echoed her, telling the education committee that "improving literacy is vital to improving social mobility". Yet his government's treatment of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) undermines his words.

Funding for ESOL has fallen from £203 million in 2010 to £90 million in 2016 – a realterms cut of 60 per cent. Already struggling, colleges and other providers have seen their capacity to deliver vital courses slashed.

This is backed up by Refugee Action's polling of 71 ESOL providers last summer. The majority were concerned that they could not provide enough classes to meet people's needs, pointing to "chronic underfunding" and, in some cases, refugees facing three-year waits.

I've met the National Association for Teaching English and Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA), Refugee Action and others over the past year. It's clear that social and economic integration is heavily reliant on English skills. Polling published last week by British Future shows strong public backing for the government to provide more support for teaching people to speak English.

The government has also published its



belated 'Integrated communities strategy'. It

finally recognised that integrating refugees

is a good objective, and it talked the talk

on language learning being vital for any

community strategy. But it did not walk

the walk on the additional funding that's so

Refugee Action pointed out "none of the £50

release appears to be for ESOL".

desperately need after seven years of cuts. As

million highlighted in the government's press

Just like other recent strategies, including

there's a jumble of ideas, but no actual money

to make them work. NATECLA believes the

"focus on informal community learning and

improving guidance to available provision

does not go far enough to address the needs

accredited English language learning that will

enable them to gain qualifications, find jobs

of learners". Instead, "it is sustained and

the extremely delayed 'Careers strategy'.

GORDON MARSDE

that match their skills, communicate with

their neighbours and participate in society".

Add in Brexit, which increasingly looks

workers than we have done for decades, and it

becomes absolutely clear that a skills system

Not just in London, where over half of the

country's ESOL provision is delivered, but

also in other major cities, we need to start

thinking about how we use the skills of the

Brexit. Many are young and adaptable, as

indeed are other migrants from outside UK

who have settled here - but as they age they

will need strategies to renew those skills too.

Nor should we neglect the challenges in

smaller towns and rural areas, which have

many EU citizens who will remain here after

fit for our future must include a maximum

competence in the English language for

everyone living in the UK.

we will have to rely more on a smaller pool

Shadow skills minister

66.

either seen a recent influx of migrants or have long-standing ethnic communities in which older people – particularly women – have sometimes felt frozen out of integration due to poor English. It often hampers integration and their prospects of getting work that might contribute to their family's budget.

This government needs to get moving – not just with words but with money - and rapidly

Yet as we prepare for these post-Brexit challenges, ESOL funding has been whittled away, inevitably depleting the cohorts of dedicated teachers.

This government needs to get moving, and rapidly. It's over three years since Demos sounded the alarm on ESOL. Lifelong learning groups have long asked to have the cuts reversed to unlock migrant capabilities.

It's no good the education secretary waxing lyrical on ESOL and on social mobility if they don't provide, either from their own resources or by lobbying the Treasury and other departments, the hard cash to go with it.



Building Resilience in Further Education & Skills

The conference promises to offer a fantastic range of speakers with discussions around:

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- **Building a Professional Pathway for Technical Education**
- **Developing World Class Apprenticeships fit for Industry**

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- A keynote address
- 'The Power of 7' Inspirational Story from Martine Wright MBE

Bookings & Information:

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www.skillsandeducationgroup.org.uk/education-conference-2018

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CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King*



Are you being served?: The aspiring chefs prep sandwiche

Just enough cooks

ive aspiring chefs have been serving lunch to elderly residents of a sheltered housing scheme in an initiative to develop their employability.

Serving sandwiches and hot soups to 30 residents every Friday afternoon, the Gateshead College learners all have learning difficulties, and are taking part in a work-placement initiative to develop their independence and build their confidence in working with members of the community.

The placement is delivered in partnership with Cambian Dilston College, and job coaches are accompanying the students on their visits to Karbon Homes in County Durham. "Through the medium of work experience, students are able to develop their

interpersonal skills and self-presentation, along with a whole host of other skills which are constantly being shaped and developed for life after college," said Carli Hayes, one of the students' job coaches.

"The tenants are delighted with the service and the smiles the young people bring with them," said Deborah Kennedy, housing support officer for Karbon Homes. "It has become a very popular activity and the residents look forward to their Friday afternoons. The interaction between the generations is truly satisfying."



New kids on the flock: The newborn lambs

Spring has sprung

griculture students have battled the elements to help more than 400 sheep give birth.

Monitoring Hartpury College's flock of a breed known as 'north-of-England mules' for 14 hours a day, staff and 140 learners helped to deliver hundreds of lambs, ferrying fresh water to the site after water supplies froze amid plummeting temperatures.

Now the students are monitoring the progress of the newborn lambs, which spent two days in pens with their mothers before entering the outside world.

Lambing season isn't quite over, and the college's 200 'easy care' ewes will begin their own efforts over the next six weeks.

"This is always a busy part of the year for us so we're grateful that we can rely on the students for help," said Andrew Eastabrook, the college's farm manager. "It's a brilliant way for them to learn; getting hands on with most aspects of the lambing process. Our staff have been brilliant as well in dealing with difficult weather conditions."

The wonderful builders of Oz

Construction learners have helped raise £20,000 for Mary Steven's Hospice by helping stage a charity performance of *The Wizard of Oz.*

Tutors at Dudley College of Technology's construction apprenticeship training centre (CAT) were approached by the hospice to build props including a prison cell and a scarecrow stand with just a week to go until the show.

Staff and level two carpentry students at CAT worked together to gather materials and design and build the props in time for the show, which starred the one-time *X*-*Factor* finalist Wagner as the wizard.

"Responding to real-life project briefs is a key part of the way in which students enhance their learning experience," said Neil Thomas, the college principal. "We were delighted to support such a good cause and are thrilled the pantomime helped to raise much needed funds for the hospice."

"The fantastic support shown to our cause has been overwhelming. They are very talented and created some fabulous props," added Amanda Bowen, deputy head of fundraising at Mary Steven's.



Pole position: Tutor Martin Stain gets to work

College is nice as Pi





he maths and English departments at North Shropshire College pulled out all the stops to celebrate National Pi Day last week.

Staff and students took part in activities to celebrate the irrational number, calculated as the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter, and extending into an infinite number of decimal places. From planting circular flower arrangements to playing circle-based sports, the day showed students the importance of maths and its context in

Celebrating Pi

day-to-day life. Freshly made pies were also available at the college's refectory.

"This has been a wonderful opportunity for students to find out more about the mathematical symbol Pi, and also the importance of maths in everyday life," said Jo Millington, the curriculum manager for math and English at the college.

The origins of the day lie in the way March 14 is written in the United States, which appears as 3/14 – similar to Pi's numerical value, which is approximately 3.14159. EDITION 239

CAMPUS ROUND-UP with Samantha King

Incubating the next generation of female leaders



Over 80 women from colleges around the country came together on International Women's Day to network and develop their leadership capabilities, reports Samantha King

• o incubate strategic leaders within an organisation, it's necessary to push power downwards, share more information, allow people to try their hand at decisionmaking and make it safe to fail, according to keynote speaker Jessica Leitch, the principal and joint head of design at Adaptive Lab.

The most common reason for leaving an organisation is one's manager, and Ms Leitch advised organisations to create alternative routes for employees to submit innovative ideas that might circumnavigate their line manager.

The audience of women in FE were gathered at London's Morley College founded in 1889 as the first institution of its kind to admit both men and women on an equal footing – for the annual Women's Leadership Network conference, where they were welcomed by college principal Andrew Gower and WLN's director of operations Kathrvn James.

FE Week's very own head of digital, Cath Murray, gave attendees advice on using social media to boost their professional profile, and coached some delegates through setting up a Twitter profile and penning their first



ever tweets, using the conference hashtag #WLNFE2018.

A workshop on flexible working, led by Helen Wright, the founder of flexible working agency 9-2-3 Jobs, invited delegates to brainstorm ideas of how FE could be more accommodating of those who work part-time - whether due to caring responsibilities or personal choice.

Sally Dicketts, the chief executive of Activate Learning, suggested shifting the focus from the "unimaginative" approach of measuring time spent in the office each week, to monitoring outcomes instead.

"We have to be really clear as managers

about what outcomes we expect at the end of the month," she said.

Dr Carole Edmond, a researcher in female attainment, advised delegates to stay "in touch with the big picture" and know what's going on both inside one's organisation and in the sector at large.

"If we work head-down, bum up, we'll miss opportunities for career advancement," she quipped.

Speaking after the event, delegate Jas Sondhi, the director for learner experience at Westminster Kingsway College, said: "We want to make a difference and believe we can lead change, however this can only be



achieved by having a strong voice that's heard by all - the conference reinforced this again and again."

The WLN is encouraging women across FE to fill in their survey, which aims to gather views on the future of the network: http://www.wlnfe.org.uk/wln-survey/

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Jon O'Boyle

Operations and quality director, Umbrella Training

Start date January 2018

Previous iob Operations director, Qube Learning

Interesting fact Jon is ambidextrous



Previous iob Interim principal, Easton and Otley College

Interesting fact

The achievement Jane is most proud of is getting a gold Duke of Edinburgh award, which helped her apply for her first teaching job.

Jane Townsend

College

Principal, Easton and Otley

Start date March 2018



Lisa Harrington

Managing director – learning division, QA Group

Start date March 2018

Previous iob Chief customer officer, BT

Interesting fact Lisa began her career as a teacher in the Bavarian Alps. **Movers** & **Shakers**

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



Natalie Sketchley

Vice-principal, Wilberforce College

Start date September 2018

Previous iob Assistant principal, Franklin Sixth-Form College

Interesting fact Natalie is a fully qualified yoga teacher.



Robin Glover-Faure

President, L3 CTS

Start date January 2018

Previous iob Vice president – airline training, L3 CTS

Interesting fact Robin began his aviation career over 30 years ago as a fast jet pilot in the Royal Air Force.

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FE Week Sudoku challenge

Last Week's solutions

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

| | 7 | | | 8 | | | | 1 | Difficulty: EASY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---------------------|
| 9 | | 8 | | | 7 | | | | |
| | 2 | 5 | 4 | 3 | | 7 | | | |
| 4 | | | | 2 | | | 9 | | |
| | | 3 | | | | 8 | | | |
| | 9 | | | 7 | | | | 6 | |
| | | 6 | | 9 | 4 | 2 | 1 | | |
| | | | 7 | | | 6 | | 9 | |
| 5 | | | | 6 | | | 4 | | |

| 5 | 1 | | 2 | 7 | | | | | Difficulty: MEDIUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| 4 | | | 6 | | 5 | | 8 | | |
| | 6 | 9 | | | | | | | |
| | | | | 1 | | | 5 | | |
| 2 | 8 | | 3 | | 4 | | 7 | 9 | |
| | 3 | | | 5 | | | | | |
| | | | | | | 5 | 4 | | |
| | 4 | | 5 | | 7 | | | 2 | |
| | | | | 2 | 6 | | 1 | 3 | Solutions: Next edition |

| 9 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 4 | 7 | 2 |
| 2 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 1 | 9 | 5 |
| 4 | 9 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 7 |
| 1 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 4 |
| 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 9 |
| 5 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 6 |
| 7 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 4 | 8 |
| 3 | 6 | 4 | 8 | 9 | 2 | 7 | 5 | 1 |
| | | | | | | | | |

Difficulty: EASY

| 9 | 2 | 8 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 6 | 4 |
| 4 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 2 | 3 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 8 |
| 1 | 8 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 9 |
| 2 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 5 |
| 5 | 9 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 1 |
| 6 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 2 |
| 8 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 6 |
| | | | | | | | | |

Difficulty: MEDIUM



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