

# SUPPORTING IMPROVEMENT



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IN  
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LEARNING  
AND SKILLS  
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SERVICE



# Welcome to this *FE Week* supplement



**Chris Henwood**  
**@Chris\_Henwood**

A host of knowledgeable contributors have made this Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) supplement, put together by the team at *FE Week*, an invaluable source of advice and guidance on provider improvement.

Contained within are relevant and up-to-date news items, pieces from industry

insiders, along with features and coverage of events to provide inspiration as to what those in the learning and skills sector might do to better their institutions.

Of course, these are the well-known aims of LSIS and so where better to start the in-depth nature of this supplement than with a full analysis of the recently-produced *How Colleges Improve* report.

Based on inspections of more than a dozen colleges, it was commissioned by LSIS and Ofsted and highlights the importance of strong governance at colleges.

The report and reaction to it from within the FE sector from the likes of Ofsted national director for learning and skills Matthew Coffey, LSIS chief executive Rob Wye and Association of Colleges director of education policy Joy Mercer, are featured on page 4.

This is preceded by two news items on page 3 that will be of interest to anybody who deals with Ofsted.

The first item centres on concerns about Ofsted reports issued under the new common inspection framework (CIF). It looks at whether colleges are getting the feedback they would want.

The second news item reveals the extent to which colleges see Ofsted's recently-launched Learner View — billed as a Trip Advisor-style measure of success or failure — as offering a useful aid in the quest to

raise standards.

But getting back to in-depth coverage, this supplement delves into the work of LSIS on page 5, where the reader will find an interview with Abi Lammas, one of LSIS's regional development managers (RDM). The role of RDM involves working with providers who want nothing more than to improve their service.

Our experts' section kicks in from page 6 and features Chris Thomson, principal of Brighton Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College, Rebecca Yeomans, Operations Director at B2B Engage, Michele Sutton, principal of Bradford College and Richard Atkins, principal of Exeter College.

Further expert pieces come from David Sykes, director of The Skills Network, Tony Lau-Walker, chief executive of Eastleigh College, Rob Wye, LSIS chief executive, and finally, Ofsted's national director of learning and skills, Matthew Coffey.

Chris Thomson gives an insightful account as to how Ofsted inspections are seen as a distraction to his main concern — meeting the learning needs of students, and Rebecca Yeomans explains the improvement journey her firm made in just 11 months to go from satisfactory to good Ofsted gradings.

On page 7, Michele Sutton talks about how her college coped with inspection despite the absence of a key member

of staff, and while it may well sound nightmarish, but a 21-minute Ofsted inspection warning was exactly what Richard Atkins got — and yet his college emerged with outstanding ratings.

On page 10, where David Sykes covers just what providers can expect under Ofsted's new CIF. The need for a truly critical self-assessment is then made clear by Tony Lau-Walker.

The *How Colleges Improve* report returns as the subject of pieces from its two authorising bodies, with Rob Wye, from LSIS, and Ofsted's Matthew Coffey highlighting its implications and recommendations.

Coverage of two key sector improvement events completes this supplement. The first, across pages 12 and 13, is from a Westminster Briefing debate on professionalism in FE that took place just a day after Lord Lingfield's review into the issue was released.

The second event, on pages 14 and 15, was an LSIS funded event on preparing for inspection under the new CIF that was led by Megan Whittaker — an additional Ofsted inspector of more than 10 years.

So there you have it — plenty to digest and plenty to discuss.

But no matter where you as a provider are placed in terms of Ofsted's gradings, all here at *FE Week* wish you the very best in achieving improvement.

**This supplement was produced by  
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*FE Week* is a newspaper dedicated to reporting on news, analysis, jobs and fun in the further education sector.

Editor:	Nick Linford
Deputy editor:	Chris Henwood
News reporter:	Holly Welham
Sales manager:	Chardelle Mason
Events:	Natalie Tremlett
Operations:	Shane Mann
Financials:	Nahed Chowdhury
Supplements:	Nick Summers

#### Contributors:

Chris Thomson	Matthew Coffey
David Sykes	Michele Sutton
Richard Atkins	Rob Wye
Tony Lau-Walker	Rebecca Yeomans

If you are interested in placing a product or job advert contact

E: [chardelle.mason@feweek.co.uk](mailto:chardelle.mason@feweek.co.uk)  
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## News

# Short shrift for new-look Ofsted reports

Reports of inspections under the new common inspection framework (CIF) are to become shorter, Ofsted has said.

The move will disappoint many in FE who see the reports as a valuable source of information on where colleges and providers are performing — and where they are failing.

The Association of Colleges (AoC) and the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) have both told of their concerns about the move.

However, an Ofsted spokesperson defended the change, saying the revamped reports would be more “user-friendly,” containing bullet points rather than lengthy pieces of text.

Nevertheless, AoC director of education policy Joy Mercer said: “Some of what we’ve heard about the new reports from inspections is concerning.

We understand that reports are going to be much shorter.

“Colleges do respect Ofsted and look to it — it has such a mass of information, so it’s a pity inspection reports have become

shorter and shorter since the early 1990s.

“It seems they’re missing a trick given what Ofsted thinks is so important to colleges.

Colleges and providers that have been inspected want to know what Ofsted thinks of them, but also want to know in a detailed way what works elsewhere so they themselves can improve.

“So there needs to be a lot more detail than it is rumoured there will be in the reports that come out from inspections under the new common inspection framework.”

The ASCL said it was important reports were easy to understand, but there was a “danger” that by making them too short useful information would be lost.

Jan Webber, ASCL inspections specialist, said: “Colleges are large and complex institutions and to describe them accurately in a series of bullet points without much detail or clarification will be hugely challenging.”

Ms Webber also had concerns about the tone of Ofsted reports.



Joy Mercer, AoC

“The new school report format is more brusque and starts by listing weaknesses rather than strengths, which immediately puts the institution on the back foot,” she said.

“The effect is to paint a picture that is more negative than it needs to be. Given how important inspection outcomes are to a college’s reputation, if this is



Jan Webber, ASCL

replicated in the CIF reports, it could be a real issue.”

An Ofsted spokesperson said: “The new CIF reports for learning and skills are designed to be clearer and more precise in order to be more user friendly both for learners and the sector.

“They will be shorter because they contain bullet points in place of text.”

## Colleges undecided on ‘Trip Advisor’ website

Providers are remaining on the fence about Ofsted’s Trip Advisor-style Learner View website.

The website, which cost £65,000 to develop and went live in time for Ofsted’s 2012/13 inspections, draws together the opinions of students about their courses and comes up with provider ratings.

Students are faced with statements such as ‘my course/programme meets my needs’ and ‘I receive the support I need to help me progress’. It then offers responses ranging from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’.

The public can see the results, which are updated after every ten responses.

And among the providers to have had student feedback since Learner View’s launch were Lewisham College, which had around 80 largely positive responses by the end of October.

A spokesperson from Lewisham College, incorporating Southwark College, said: “At Lewisham College incorporating Southwark College we believe getting learners involved is a real positive, as long as it’s regarded as a snapshot picture and used productively and appropriately.

“Understanding what learners think is a very good idea, and we are interested in how Learner View will be used, especially whether it is going to trigger inspections if there are complaints or concerns.”

Bill Jones (right), executive director of planning and performance at Sheffield College, which had not received any student feedback on the website, said:

“As the website has only recently been launched, it is too early to say how useful it is going to be. More of our students would need to complete the questionnaire.

“There are other questions that would also be useful to us, for example, asking students about their reasons for attending college and what their intended destination is, and it would be interesting to hear their views on teaching and learning methods.”

However, an Ofsted spokesperson said there were no “current plans” to alter the website.

“The Learner View website is working well and Ofsted has been pleased with its results, therefore there are no current plans to change any of its features,” she said.

“So far, there have been 9,310 completed surveys, highlighting Ofsted is well on the way to reaching its 10,000 completed survey target by Christmas or in fact sooner.

“Currently, there are 424 providers with surveys completed and 87 with more than 10 completed surveys.

“It has been providing useful information for inspectors and providers.

Ofsted is keen that learners continue to contribute their views in a variety of ways including Learner View.”

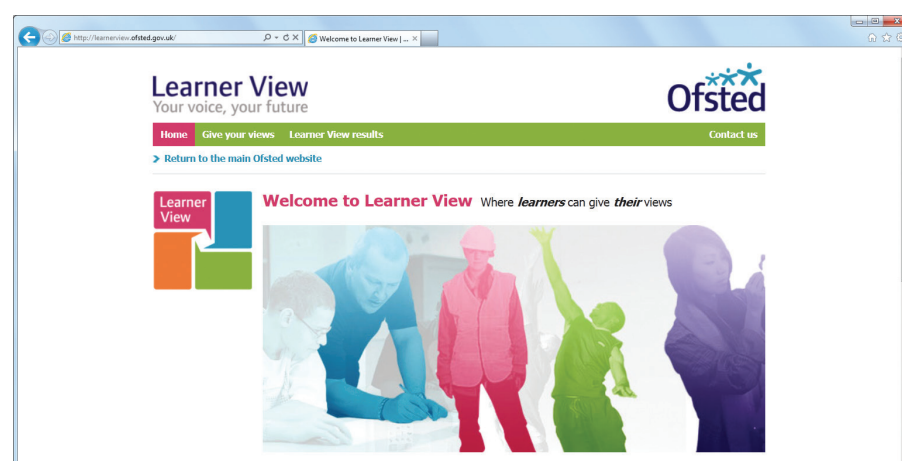
Ofsted’s national director for learning and skills, Matthew Coffey, said: “The National Union of Students and our learner panel quite liked the immediacy of Learner View — that what they think can be seen by people who can do something about it immediately.

“It gives an overview of what the student body is saying about their provider.

“But what is really important is that it doesn’t replace the interaction inspectors have with individual learners on individual courses.”



Bill Jones, Sheffield College



Ofsted’s Learner View website



# Strength at the top is key to improvement concludes Ofsted

Strong, effective leadership is one of the key features of success, suggests Ofsted's How Colleges Improve report.

Winning colleges were seen to share characteristics of strong governance and management — as well as a clear vision and direction.

The report, commissioned by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) and Ofsted, highlighted how colleges built on best practice to ensure that the education and training they provided was at least good or outstanding.

Meanwhile, unrealistic self-assessments with little or no critical insight, and unexpected job cuts showed up time and again among poorly performing colleges.

The 43-page report also warned colleges about the dangers of paying too much attention to building projects and mergers.

**This report confirmed the importance of outstanding leadership and management**

Ofsted's national director for learning and skills, Matthew Coffey, said: "Successful colleges always had strong leadership and management and the importance of this cannot be underestimated.

"All the elements of this report are inextricably linked to the actions and behaviours of leaders and managers, and the example they set.

"In outstanding and improving colleges staff were more willing to accept change and could easily describe what their college stood for.

"As a result leadership teams were better placed to act decisively to tackle underperformance and secure improvement."

Good and outstanding colleges were not afraid of self-assessment — even if it was self-critical — as they understood it was integral to both their and the college's improvement.

While there was no single explanation as to why colleges underperformed there were often many interrelated reasons and common features.

Often, there was complacency, and lack of ambition, direction and vision from senior staff. This was coupled with a defensive inward-looking approach, where colleges were slow to accept change or act when data showed decline.

Weaker colleges were often made up of a higher proportion of temporary staff who were not properly managed either due to weak lines of accountability or weak performance management processes.

LSIS chief executive Rob Wye said: "This report confirmed the importance of outstanding leadership and management, underpinned by informed governance, cannot be underestimated.

"It is also clear that robust and honest self-review and reflection is a vital ingredient of any provider's improvement journey.

"The evidence in this report confirms what many will have thought for a long time — that the best colleges are those where the teaching, learning and assessment delivers excellent results that match the needs of learners, employers and the local community.

"LSIS commissioned this report to ensure that we all gained a thorough understanding of how colleges improve.

"LSIS is focused on improvement across the sector and there is much for other providers, as well as colleges, to consider and learn from this report."

He added: "It was put out as a stimulus for debate at college level in order to encourage principals, senior teams and governing bodies to think about how to match what the best colleges are doing, with a very good number of case studies within that.

"It has prompted that debate. It hasn't prompted a national debate and most of what it said was a reinforcement of what Ofsted has said before.

"But it's a useful contribution — it will underpin what will go into chief inspectors' reports in terms of what's good and what's not so good and where the focus need to be for improvement."

The report was welcomed within the FE sector. Association of Colleges director of education policy Joy Mercer said: "Ofsted did two reports around 2009 on how colleges improve and how colleges fail, so we were really pleased it devoted resources to returning to these issues.

"What they produced didn't really contain any surprises and predictably what was of most interest were the key features of outstanding colleges. And what is essential is that everybody can be moved into that place.

"The sort of things that repeat

themselves were around leadership and management with the need for determination and drive, plus the ability to affect change.

"Governors are key too. They need the right information. Where there were failings, governors didn't know what questions to ask — perhaps they were too close to the management?"

She added: "The reaction to the report has been positive — it's been good to have good practice underlined, but what colleges do say is 'so what is the next stage?'"

"We now know what Ofsted thinks, so how can we commit resources, how can government commit resources, to bringing everybody up to the standard of the best. It's a call to action."

Further issues highlighted in the report, which was released on September 27, were inconsistent tracking of learner progress, financial instability and defensive, inward-looking colleges being slow to accept change or act when data showed decline.

Association of School and College Leaders spokesperson Stephan Jungnitz said: "I'm pleased the report recognised the pivotal role of college leaders in driving forward institutional success, as well as the complex and demanding range of areas they have to deal with, from buildings and finance to teaching and learning.

"As we well know, each college is unique and the road to success will be different for each — there is no magic formula. Having said that, the insights in the report will be useful to college leaders, and for many will reinforce what they instinctively already know about improving their institutions."

Lynne Sedgmore, executive director at the 157 Group, said: "Ofsted's report has to be a useful tool for the sector.

"The 157 Group welcomes the focus that it puts on leadership and management and on placing teaching and learning at the very heart of what every college is about.

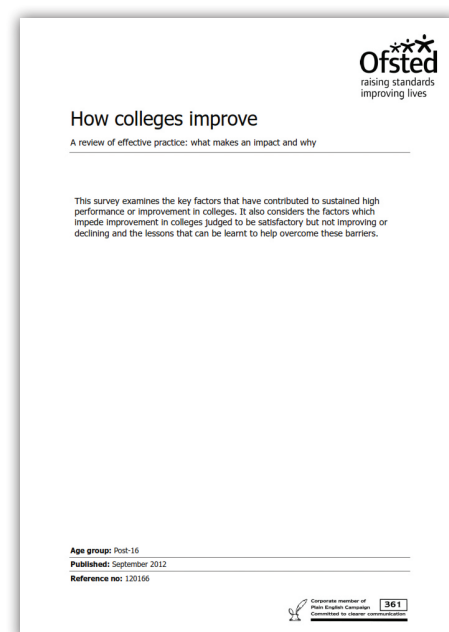
"Teaching and learning is a key priority area for us and for our members and it is good to see its importance re-emphasised.

"Robust and meaningful self-assessment is something we in the 157 Group spend a lot of time supporting members and others to achieve — we have a number of peer support networks working in this area, for example. Ofsted's report reaffirms how vital this is."

Visit [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/how-colleges-improve](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/how-colleges-improve) to download a copy of the report.



Lynne Sedgmore, 157 Group



Ofsted's report, available on [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



Stephan Jungnitz, ASCL



# Abi to help providers improve

The chances are that if you come across Abi Lammas (right) in a professional capacity then you are probably taking steps to improve your organisation.

It's her job to help providers who are experiencing difficulties or those who simply want to tweak their service with a view to improvement.

Abi is one of nine Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) regional development managers – a job she has held for nearly three years.

**I work on ensuring providers make full use of the range of improvement services we offer**

"We work to support learning and skills providers in each English region so that they obtain the best advice and support on quality improvement, promoting the whole menu of LSIS programmes and services," she said.

"We signpost providers to the best sources of help and support. I have a lot of experience working on various LSIS national programmes, including the QCF Readiness Programme and the National

Teaching and Learning Programme."

It's a role that involves a number of tasks for Abi, ensuring wide variation at the office and out and about.

She could be dealing with nearly a dozen providers every month as they bid to raise standards.

"Part of my role is to support the improvement adviser service," said Abi.

"I lead the implementation of the improvement and development service within my region.

"This means I work on ensuring providers make full use of the range of improvement services we offer.

"I work with a variety of providers and colleges cover about a third of my workload."

She added: "On a monthly basis, I probably work closely with seven to ten colleges performing tasks such as diagnosing potential problems before they become substantial, or working closely with improvement partner colleges in order to encourage them to play a greater role in supporting other sector organisations.

"No two days are the same for me. I could be doing any number of tasks, from meeting with senior college management, to conducting a case review with a failing organisation, to writing presentations."

The help that Abi and her fellow regional development managers can give providers has even been credited with boosting Ofsted grades.

Their expertise covers a host of provider issues, including teaching, learning & assessment, leadership, management & governance, and

organisational performance.

"My advice for all providers with any queries is turn to your LSIS regional development manager," said Abi.

"For example, ensuring excellent leadership, management and governance is one of LSIS's priorities for the sector and we can provide the support corporations may need.

"We offer a range of support packages in response to the issues the sector faces."



## The LSIS advisory service

The LSIS improvement adviser service provides consultancy support for all types of provider, other than school sixth forms, helping them raise performance levels across the range of performance.

The service originated with the 2005 White Paper on learning and skills which promoted the set-up of a 'rapid response unit' to deal with failing providers.

Over time, the service was extended to providers who simply wished to improve performance. Regional development managers work to support learning and skills providers in each English region to obtain the best advice and support on quality improvement, promoting the whole menu of LSIS programmes and services. The following is a list of the LSIS regional development managers. To contact any of them email enquiries@lsis.org.uk

East Midlands	Lorna Freakley
East of England	Mark Barnsley
London	Abi Lammas
North East	Jane Thompson
North West	Jo Higgins
South East	New regional development manager to be appointed
South West	Deborah Farley
West Midlands	Sue Blake
Yorkshire and Humberside	Colin Forrest

## Q&A with Abi Lammas, LSIS regional development officer

Are there any common problems you come across among colleges and training providers?

I find that problems tend to rear their heads at the same time because they are triggered by national changes, such as in policy.

If an organisation isn't prepared for the changes they can be caught out.

Issues in English, maths and ESOL can also be an issue for many organisations.

Finally, lack of aligning operational processes to the college vision and strategy can have a huge impact on the quality of an organisation, often robust processes may be present, but they are not being linked up or implemented correctly.

Are there any problems that appear to be becoming more common among providers, or do you expect there to be?

A common problem now is the need to improve teaching, learning and assessment in light of Ofsted's new common inspection framework.

Through engaging with the LSIS teaching and learning programme organisations are supported to embed a culture of great teaching and learning which, of course, results in positive outcomes for learners.

Some college corporations may need some guidance on how to respond to the new freedoms and flexibilities that have been introduced to the sector and governing bodies need to feel confident to ask teaching and learning staff challenging questions about quality.

Are there any common successes that could be repeated at other colleges?

Yes, there are a number of them that can be replicated at other colleges.

To replicate success, providers need to have a whole organisational approach, to have 'buy-in' from their senior management team, corporation and college, and the ability to build capacity. However, they need to believe in the support they receive from LSIS.

I'd advise any organisation that seeks support from us to invest in the time and vision needed to make the support work.

If you take a whole organisation approach we can make a difference, in fact Skills Funding Agency-funded providers who receive help from us go up on average by one grade at their next Ofsted inspection.

What are the big challenges that colleges face?

There are three challenges for colleges that come to mind. One is that some may feel they need support, but aren't sure what support they need or where to find it. Another is understanding the implications of policy and how to contextualise it in order to implement it at an organisational level.

And, of course, time and money can always be a big challenge.

I'd advise any organisation to get in touch with their regional development manager to access support from LSIS. We can work with the individual organisation to draw up and develop the best possible solutions from the range of services and support available.

Also, don't forget to get involved in the networks in the region. These are rich in provider experience and an opportunity for peer support.

# Ofsted is a 'distraction' to be taken seriously



**Don't get bogged down in the new common inspection framework, says principal Chris Thomson. Give students the provision you'd wish upon your own children and you'll be outstanding.**

You'll probably think we're mad, but for more than a decade at Brighton Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College we've cultivated the view that far from being a priority, inspection is a distraction.

Through four Ofsted inspections – the last in October this year – we've simply said to staff: "Concentrate on delivering the college

mission. If we're meeting the individual learning needs of all our students it doesn't matter what the latest common inspection framework (CIF) says, we'll be outstanding."

If this sounds like quality-suicide, ask yourself two questions. Does your college mission put learners first and are you exclusively committed to that mission? If the answer to both is yes, our approach should begin to look more rational than it might at first seem.

But no quick fixes. Even in a specialist A level sixth-form college the size of some general FE college departments, it has taken us years to develop a culture that will produce uniform high quality – and we're not there yet.

Other colleges have accomplished it quicker. I know one that made astonishing progress through a marvellously simple instrument of change, the principal persistently asked one key question: "Is this provision good enough for our own children?"

If I can put it this way, there have been a host of strategies at the forefront of our vision, but inspection has, by comparison, constituted only the equivalent of an occasional glance in the wing mirror.

That doesn't mean we haven't taken it seriously. Having been inspected in 2007

and told by Ofsted last September that they would not be visiting us in 2011/12, it seemed a good bet they would drop by some time this year.

By the time term started this September, our vice-principal and college nominee Sally Bromley had prepared data packs for every department, with an action plan that would kick in the moment inspection was notified.

This made the four days' preparation time much smoother than it would have been. Key managers worked through the weekend and the college was open to any staff who wanted to come in. We made it clear there was no expectation that they should.

Although seven inspectors arrived rather than four, as was the case in 2007, I felt the inspection went even more smoothly than it had then. One or two teachers were disconcerted by the brevity of some drop-in observations, and some intervention was needed where an inspector's assumptions were false-footed by our way of doing things.

But our 7.30am meetings to prepare for the day's inspection were over in barely more time than it took to devour the Danish pastries and coffee. The inspectors found it a positive experience too. At

the end of the first afternoon they were already commenting on how friendly and welcoming our staff were.

Our mood was enhanced by the supportive responses our students made on Ofsted's Learner View website. Although we didn't manage to see how parents responded, a number emailed us directly to express thanks for our work. We passed these on.

We felt tested but well listened to. No stone was left unturned, but our inspectors ensured that their conclusions were informed by all the evidence we presented.

Enormous credit must go to Sally; it wasn't hard to encourage teachers to be bold and risk an exciting lesson rather than play safe.

If you are fortunate to have a nominee who is tireless, meticulous and enthusiastic, the process of inspection will go as smoothly as the college's culture permits. As to whether that culture is best enhanced by focusing on Ofsted and the CIF, I am doubtful – but I'm reserving the right to change my mind if our grades change between now and publication.

**Chris Thomson is principal of Brighton Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College**

## Provider's rapid improvement

**Just 11 months ago, Ofsted inspectors went into Berkshire independent learning provider B2B Engage and judged its provision to be satisfactory. The grading triggered a host of improvements that, as B2B's operations director Rebecca Yeomans explains, resulted in an improved grading following a September inspection.**

B2B wasted no time acting on the areas of improvement that were identified at our previous inspection of August 2011.

We held monthly quality meetings with input from a quality consultant to maintain the momentum of improvements, and it paid off in our subsequent inspection 11 months later.

We had been informed of the new Ofsted inspection via the two-day notice period on Thursday, September 13.

In order to maximise the scope of provision inspected, B2B provided the inspectors with a schedule of activities during the week of inspection.

But due to the nature of work-based learning, and the short notice of the inspection, it wasn't possible to prepare a slick schedule for the inspectors (as we had when we had three weeks' notice).

We were therefore advised to offer

alternative observation opportunities for the inspectors that included activity such as the inspector shadowing a learner for a morning.

However, we emerged with a good grading having implemented a series of improvements following the previous inspection.

We began our improvement journey by implementing a more robust quality assurance (QA) schedule.

With a network of 10 subcontractors, B2B had to ensure QA activity which was targeted at both direct and subcontracted delivery.

Firstly, we trained senior managers as observers of teaching and learning practices, as well as renewing our observation policy and procedure.

We then prioritised a schedule of teaching and learning observations to identify what was happening first hand in the field.

By targeting the tutors and assessors that have direct contact with our learners, we were able to impact on delivery quickly.

Through conducting and moderating the observations, it became clear what areas of improvement and training needs were required among staff.

B2B also revised its subcontractor audit procedures, combining both quality and paperwork audits into one.

By merging the audits into a 'mini Ofsted inspection' format, we were able to get a better picture of how quality and compliance worked together, and how subcontractors were performing in all areas.

We then planned a schedule of quarterly training days for direct staff and subcontractors.

For direct staff we concentrated on specific elements of the learner journey, revisiting induction and initial assessment procedures, formal progress reviews, as well as teaching and assessment practice.

These included setting smart [specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely] targets, lesson planning and embedding key and functional skills.

For subcontractors, we provided a series of sessions on how to self-assess, quality expectations of B2B and how to improve the learner journey.

By training subcontractors on how to self-assess, we were able to show them how to identify their own areas which needed to be improved and what they could do to improve the quality of their own delivery and service. This was a driver for getting each and every subcontractor on board.

A further area for improvement was the regular use and analysis of data to allow informed judgements and progression on



success and performance.

Although data was always analysed, it was not used sufficiently and effectively and was often something not all managers and subcontractors were aware of.

The review of data was therefore added to the agendas of all one-to-ones and team meetings, from senior management to team meeting level.

Further data was also requested of staff and subcontractors to track the progress of every learner. Progress data could then be analysed to identify 'at risk' learners etc. These measures could be put in place to support achievements of that learner.

**Rebecca Yeomans, operations director at B2B Engage and quality nominee during inspection**



# Lessons from inspection pilots

**More than one nominee, up-to-date information, and actively seeking out views of students and staff is critical says college principal, Michele Sutton.**

I received a telephone call one Friday afternoon when I was driving from Bradford to Manchester. It was from an Ofsted inspector who started the conversation with: "I know this could be a long shot, but would you take part in a no-notice pilot inspection?"

I wanted to speak to our nominee, but she was on a business visit to India with the Association of Colleges (one of the issues to be considered — more later).

Eventually, we decided to go ahead. The outcomes would be unpublished and confidential, so we saw it as providing somewhere in the region of £60,000-worth of free consultancy.

There were no big surprises when the inspectors came because the focus was still very much on the impact on learning. However, there were far more observations in curriculum areas than in the past — an average of 12 to 15 — and it was from this activity that inspectors were led to other lines of enquiry.

We felt that we were ready, although a little apprehensive about how the operational details, such as rooms, class timetables, identification of areas not in scope, would be organised to our usual high standards with no notice.

But we managed — and felt that the inspectors found this process more difficult than us. Teaching staff reported that they felt much less stressed compared with previous inspection regimes.

**Keep as much information as possible online and easily accessible**

We learned a great deal. Rather than inspectors staying in their base rooms, we took them to where the evidence was held, which meant that they saw more of staffrooms and business support offices. And they spoke to students — lots of them — in all types of locations, not just in classrooms or pre-arranged meetings.

The unofficial limiting grade for teaching, learning and assessment will mean a change of focus for providers away from sole emphasis on success rates, while the new focus on performance management should lead to improved teaching, learning and assessment. Learner, parent and employer



views also have much more prominence.

The new regime could have a major impact on inspection grades in the sector as it could give the impression that standards are falling when it is actually the inspection methodology that has changed.

The new common inspection framework (CIF) will mean many colleges moving to no-notice observations of teaching staff — many have already taken this step.

Our advice to colleges preparing for an inspection under the new CIF is to have more than one trained nominee (remember India), keep as much information as possible online and easily accessible across the institution, ensure a good version control is in place and ensure there is full understanding of the quality of any subcontracting arrangements.

It would also be wise to keep public course information up to date as inspectors will use it for information before they arrive, ensure that staff keep student tracking and monitoring up to date, preferably on-line, and keep the latest self-assessment report and an updated quality improvement plan on the provider gateway. And if there have been significant changes since the self-assessment was published — for example, failing provision that has now improved — add an update to the self-assessment report.

Actively seek your stakeholders' — students, parents, employers — views in a range of ways and then make sure that you tell them what you've done as a result of their feedback.

Keep your staff as fully informed as possible, before, during and after the inspection.

You need to encourage a different mind-set to ensure that you and your colleagues are always prepared should the inspector ring on a Thursday morning to tell you they will be there next Monday.

**Michele Sutton OBE is principal of Bradford College**

**The real college was judged says Principal Richard Atkins, not one that had spent three weeks preparing.**

We were keen to get a health check from Ofsted. Exeter College had last been inspected in 2008 and rated as good, but we had received a Notice to Improve (NtI) for learner success rates.

Having reacted quickly and decisively to the NtI, we then self-assessed as outstanding in 2009/10 and 2010/11. So, after consulting staff and governors, we agreed to put ourselves forward as a pilot for the new common inspection framework (CIF).

We had heard nothing by February this year and assumed that we were not to be included.

I then received a call asking if we would be a "no-notice" pilot on condition that I told no one, including the staff and governors. I agreed.

On Monday, March 12, I was telephoned by an Ofsted team who were on a train due in Exeter within 30 minutes to start a full unannounced inspection. I told all staff by email and our 21-day plan became a 21-minute plan.

**I told all staff by email and our 21-day plan became a 21-minute plan**

The role of the internal nominee was crucial, and much more demanding than for an inspection with three weeks' notice. We ended up with three people — deputy principal, assistant principal and head of quality — working together as our internal nominee team. They set up a temporary base room for inspectors in a senior manager's office.

Exeter College is a large provider of apprenticeships so employer visits and work-based assessment observations had to be organised quickly. Employers were supportive and flexible. Staff responded brilliantly too. By noon, teaching observations had started and 90 minutes later we had achieved our first grade one.

In all, the inspectors carried out more than 60 graded observations, completed numerous learning walks and observed many other student activities and interactions. There were far fewer meetings with managers and staff — about 10 in total.

The outcomes from the inspection were



fantastic for everyone at Exeter. At the feedback session with me and our chair on the Friday, we were rated outstanding for teaching and learning, learners' outcomes and leadership and management. We were all delighted and shared the news with students, parents, employers and stakeholders.

Inevitably, having been the first no-notice inspection, we have subsequently received considerable interest from colleges across England. We have also had time to reflect. There are many positives: Ofsted inspected and judged the real Exeter College, not the one that had spent three weeks preparing for a production, and teaching and support staff overwhelmingly preferred it to an inspection with three weeks' notice.

The focus on teaching, learning and assessment in the new CIF also suits us and reflects our own focus over recent years: there were far fewer meetings with managers and staff — four in total. Our best advocates were our students; their feedback was critical to our success.

I believed that no-notice should be replaced by short notice inspections, and this has happened. And inspectors will need to be flexible in their approach to limited notice inspections, especially with regard to base rooms, availability of students and staff and employer visits.

We offered this and other feedback to Ofsted after the pilot; several points that we raised have been incorporated in the new approach to inspecting colleges.

For me, as a long-standing principal, the whole process confirmed my view that inspections can be a useful and helpful part of a college's quality improvement toolkit, provided that all sides approach the week in a positive frame of mind, with the will to learn.

**Richard Atkins is principal of Exeter College**

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# New regime requires quick results

**The ‘requires improvement’ grade is a great opportunity to accelerate the pace providers improve says David Sykes. Inspectors must quickly get to grips with a new CIF and colleges must recognise it’s time for change.**

The new common inspection framework (CIF) represents a substantial shift, not only in its structure and application, but in its core reasoning and message.

The new chief inspector has made a clear statement of purpose — too many learners are receiving provision that is satisfactory and inadequate, and the new framework is specifically designed to not only contribute to raising standards, but as an imperative to do it more quickly.

The inspection’s chief tool, the CIF, gives inspectors more flexibility to focus on the core aspects of teaching, learning and assessment that have a direct impact on the experience of learners.

The framework is much simpler, with the removal of the plethora of judgements found in the previous frameworks.

Gone are limiting grades for safeguarding and equality and diversity, however in its place is the new “requires improvement” judgement, replacing the former satisfactory grading.

The “requires improvement” grade has much stronger reputational implications

for providers, however I believe it presents a great opportunity to accelerate the pace at which providers address areas for improvement.

To do this, two things must happen.

Firstly, inspectors must quickly get to grips with applying the new framework.

Some well-trodden inspection practices must be discarded and inspectors will have to demonstrate they can make key judgements against the critical aspects of teaching, learning and assessment in a broader sense.

They will have to rely less on historical data as the main source of evidence, instead making judgements about the experience of current learners, with reference to outcomes where appropriate.

It is likely that inspectors will spend more time following groups of learners, sampling a wider range of activities, such as self study time and tutorials to judge how effective this time in helping learners progress.

This will challenge inspectors during the early stages of working to the new CIF, but the opportunity now exists to explore in much greater detail the experience of learners across all aspects of the provision they receive.

Secondly, learning providers will have to interpret the core message of the new CIF, and quickly recognise that it represents

a step change from previous inspection practice.

Essentially, the grade for teaching, learning and assessment can be considered as being the new limiting grade.

Colleges and other providers that aspire to be outstanding must now have outstanding teaching learning and assessment — therefore it follows that providers who consider this aspect of provision to be satisfactory must now declare it as “requiring improvement”.

The ability to focus on this aspect of provision, and their success in creating and implementing strategies to improve teaching and learning will be the single biggest factor in future inspection outcomes.

The two-day notice period for inspections has been clearly introduced to prevent stage-managed activities.

Schedules for visits, interviews and observation activities will be more fluid and often subject to change.

They will be less detailed and inspectors will have to work more proactively to ensure they can find alternative sources of evidence for learning.

Inspectors will grade more than just traditional observations — they will grade any activity where learning is evident.

This may be activities in the workplace that don’t necessarily involve the provider.



Colleges and training providers need to recognise this.

Previous incarnations of the CIF took time to settle, for inspectors and providers alike, and it will be interesting to see how the early implementation of the new CIF takes shape.

It is clear however that Ofsted is determined to raise the bar.

If inspection outcomes can accurately articulate the quality of provision and what needs to take place to improve it, and providers are able to interpret and implement plans to address areas for improvement then I believe the new CIF presents an opportunity to genuinely raise standards throughout FE and the learning and skills sector.

**David Sykes, director at The Skills Network**

# Olympic effort required for outstanding change

**You need to change the culture of your college if you want to move from ‘good’ to ‘outstanding’ says Tony Lau-Walker. And you don’t do this by first looking at the common inspection framework.**

When we were asked how Eastleigh College achieved its outstanding status this year the reply reflected Mo Farah’s comment after winning Olympic gold this summer — “it was a long journey and required constant graft and hard work”.

Moving from satisfactory or even inadequate to good is relatively easy for a determined senior management team, because it is about cutting out obvious dysfunctional performances within the curriculum and across the college.

Moving from good to outstanding, however, is a step change in both performance and expectations. Staff and managers need to want to do it and to believe that they can be outstanding. They need to change the culture of the organisation.

It is not about stopping doing things that are ineffective, but about doing things that stretch boundaries and innovate. It will engage staff in a dialogue about teaching and learning, and will give ownership of standards and targets at the lowest levels.

Eastleigh College’s approach to inspection was, initially, not to look at the common inspection framework (CIF), but to be clear about what was needed to make our efforts successful for our learners. We were critical of our efforts to meet learners’ needs, however harsh this meant our internal self-assessment grades were for particular teams.

Only when we were clear what worked for our learners did we seek to understand what the inspectors were looking for and how it fitted with what we did best.

Managing an inspection starts with clarifying the interpretation of the CIF and challenging staff with these standards — from governors through to classroom assistants. Our commitment was to critically affirm what we did well and build on it.

We acted on three pieces of advice. First, do not operate at an aggregated level with results and performance. While it is reassuring as an overview, it masks the things that need addressing. Second, action everything that needs addressing and ensure everything is followed up. Record these actions and, most importantly, their impact. Third, when observing lessons, focus on learning and learner engagement — this should inform the grade, even if it gives a less flattering grade profile to the college.

By understanding what inspectors were looking for and matching what we did to the framework of the CIF, rather than to the rumours and myths circulating in the sector, the inspection went smoothly.

Eastleigh volunteered to have a short-notice inspection as part of Ofsted’s pilot because we were confident, following our self-assessment, that we could evidence all aspects the CIF would examine. The framework has now been streamlined, inspectors call it flat-lining — the absence of a spiky profile — which may enable colleges that have the key things right to achieve ‘outstanding’.

The grade of teaching and learning has become more important, a natural progression for an organisation now seeking to raise the importance of learner experience — hence the new Learner View website.

The criteria is more aspirational and more focused than before, placing emphasis on engagement, high expectations and motivation, which depicts a demanding classroom experience and committed teachers.

Outcomes for learners remains the lead criteria for effectiveness, but is now treated as a hygiene element, inevitability so as success rates rise and the sector is seen to be competent at achieving success with the learners that it serves.



Merging equality and diversity into both teaching and learning, and management, along with safeguarding, enables a more realistic assessment of these elements.

To prepare for the new CIF, colleges need to concentrate on what is right for their learners — the right learners on the right courses with the right support.

With a major investment of time and effort in staff development and a hypercritical self-assessment, the rest will follow and standards will rise.

**Tony Lau-Walker is chief executive of Eastleigh College**



# Laying the path for improvement journeys

A review of the FE teacher and trainer qualifications is one way the Learning and Skills Improvement Service is helping providers says Rob Wye.

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) and Ofsted co-commissioned the How Colleges Improve report to ensure all of us in the sector gained a thorough understanding of what exactly is required if standards are to be raised.

It made three recommendations that LSIS should follow, which we are already implementing.

These are to continue to focus training and development on achieving effective governance and outstanding teaching, learning and assessment, to take steps to increase the involvement of underperforming colleges in LSIS's programmes, and to promote the sharing of best practice between institutions in tackling common impediments to progress.

**Our aim to work with the sector to improve the sector**

These three points coincide with LSIS's key priorities for the sector — to equip the sector to achieve outstanding teaching and learning, to ensure the sector has excellent leadership, management and governance, and to mobilise effective and timely intervention both to avoid and resolve cases of failure.

As part of our commitment to our first priority, we are leading a review of FE teacher and trainer qualifications to ensure teachers are equipped with the professionalism required to achieve excellence.

We are supportive of any initiative that aims to improve professionalism in the sector, and gives the sector the recognition and profile that it deserves.

Finally, we are conducting the secretariat function for the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning led by Frank McLoughlin CBE.

The commission is committed to hearing from people with insights and experience from across the sector.

A number of seminars are being held, and the questions for each seminar and the summary reports will be made available online to encourage and enable as many people as possible to be engaged in this important work.

We believe the importance of outstanding leadership and management, underpinned by informed governance, cannot be underestimated.



Following the release of How Colleges Improve, Ofsted's national director for learning and skills, Matthew Coffey, said: "Successful colleges always had strong leadership and management, and the importance of this cannot be underestimated.

"All the elements of this report are inextricably linked to the actions and behaviours of leaders and managers and the example they set."

We are leading a college for leaders called The Leadership Exchange, which will help build on these themes and offer existing and aspiring principals, chief executives and managing directors the opportunity to connect with, and learn from, the best leaders within the FE sector and beyond.

Finally, LSIS's improvement services are well-placed to deliver on the recommendations Ofsted made and we already have evidence of impact in these areas.

For example, Skills Funding Agency-funded colleges that have worked with us in order to achieve improvement have increased their Ofsted rating by one grade at their next inspection.

However, a college is not properly ready for inspection if it does not undergo honest and thorough self-assessment, which we can support.

It is our aim to work with the sector to improve the sector, enabling those providers with expertise to be the improvement providers supporting those organisations in need.

In addition, robust and honest self-review and reflection is a vital ingredient of any provider's improvement journey.

Summing up, we have taken on board the recommendations made in How Colleges Improve, and will be embedding them in our work. We are committed to working with the sector to improve the sector, by collaborating with improvement providers to assist those organisations in need we will continue to deliver the support needed.

**Rob Wye, LSIS chief executive**

If colleges want to improve, the leadership team must be honest and open about its weaknesses says Matthew Coffey.

Ofsted's How Colleges Improve report, published in September, was commissioned by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service to highlight how colleges can build on best practice and ensure the education they are providing is at least good or outstanding.

It found that successful colleges shared the same characteristics which centred on strong leadership and management and a clear vision and direction with genuinely collaborative approaches.

The determination and drive of senior leadership teams in making sure their visions and values became the culture and ethos of their colleges were evident in the colleges that were outstanding or improving quickly.

In outstanding and improving colleges staff at all levels were more willing to accept change and could easily describe what their college stood for.

As a result leadership teams were better placed to act decisively to tackle underperformance and secure improvement.

Good and outstanding colleges were not afraid of self-assessment processes even if they were critical as they understood it was integral to the college's improvement.

In outstanding colleges internal communication with staff was excellent; great attention to detail was paid to both routine information as well as the dissemination of key critical messages.

Self-assessment included all key processes and areas of work, for example, work subcontracted to other providers. Self-assessment was accurate, evidence-based, involved all staff and brought about improvements.

**Self-assessment reports in weaker colleges were often over-optimistic**

One of the differences between underperforming colleges and more successful and improving colleges, as seen both during the visits and in the review of reports, was that the latter saw observing teaching and learning as an integral part of the process of improving quality, outcomes and assessment. It was not viewed as an end in itself to satisfy the requirements of Ofsted.

Outstanding colleges had a good reputation with not only staff and learners,



but the community more widely, especially where colleges engaged with local employers.

While there was no single explanation as to why some colleges underperformed there were often many interrelated reasons and common features. Often, there was complacency, and lack of ambition, direction and vision from senior staff.

Too often leaders and managers were overly preoccupied with finance or capital buildings projects to the detriment of promoting good teaching and learning or developing the curriculum.

Self-assessment reports in weaker colleges were often over-optimistic and lacked critical insight which brought about limited improvements.

This was often coupled with a defensive inward-looking approach, where colleges were slow to accept change or act when data showed decline.

In weaker colleges there tended to be a larger proportion of temporary staff. They were often not properly managed, either because internal arrangements for performance management were weak or because lines of accountability for staff employed through external agencies were unclear or absent.

Ofsted has a number of recommendations for both colleges and the government and these mainly focus on promoting the benefits of robust, accurate and open self-assessment in improving quality within the context of local accountability.

The main messages from the report can be summed up quite nicely by the principal of an improving college, who said: "To make progress, colleges, particularly the leadership, management and governors, must be honest and open about the things done badly."

All in all we found that a defensive and inward-looking approach especially to self-assessment does not serve as a good base for improvement.

**Matthew Coffey, Ofsted national director for learning and skills**



# Westminster event: professionalism in



From left: Rob Wye, David Sherlock, John Freeman, Martin Doel and Toni Fazaeli

**Holly Welham**

@HollyWelham

Principals, teachers and experts gathered to discuss improving the status of staff in colleges and training providers at a roundtable event in Westminster.

The impact of Lord Lingfield's independent review on professionalism in further education was at the core

**“The government is effectively saying it isn't going to interfere anymore**

of the panel's debate, which included chief executives from the Association of Colleges (AoC), the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) and the Institute for Learning (IfL).

At the Westminster Briefing event David Sherlock, a key contributor in the Lingfield review, stressed the importance of creating an environment in which the professionalism of staff was sustained and enhanced naturally without being “prodded, prompted or permitted” by government.

“The principal message we got from talking to people around the country was please, leave us alone to get on with teaching and serving communities and employers,” he said.

The panel welcomed the report's

suggestion that government should step back.

One of the ways to give the sector more autonomy is through a guild. Originally the idea of former Skills Minister John Hayes, the report strongly supported the plan, and on the day of its publication in October the government announced the AoC and Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) had been given the green light to take proposals forward.

Martin Doel, chief executive of the AoC, said the next step was for his organisation and AELP to draw up a consultation document with the proposals partners.

“The proposal was put together in around three weeks, and necessarily it is open-ended and poses a number of questions we need to resolve,” he said.

Mr Doel said details needed to be confirmed with partners and consistent with the Lingfield report, but saw the guild as concentrating on individual development as a “shared enterprise between employers and employees”.

“I don't think the guild will directly have a role in relation to overall institutional performance,” he said. “This is clearly the aggregation of individuals work, but I don't think the guild will be going into an institution saying your systems are wrong, your processes are wrong, your quality's wrong.”

“The temptation when you set up one of these bodies is to ask it to do everything, but it's important to say what it won't do.”

The proposal had three core areas: teaching and learning, leadership and management skills, and stimulating individual practice.

The guild was supported by the panel and Rob Wye, chief executive of the LSIS, particularly welcomed the ownership of

standards he said the guild would give the sector.

“The government is effectively saying it isn't going to interfere in this anymore. It's supportive of you taking this task on, but you're a grown-up sector, and in the same way that we trust higher education to take that agenda forwards on its own behalf, we're looking to the further education sector to do the same,” he said.

Lord Lingfield was asked by Mr Hayes to carry out the review looking at how to “raise the status of further education professionals” in February. It followed a boycott of the IfL, an independent body that supports the professional development of teachers and trainers, by 40,000 of its University and College Union (UCU) members. In 2007 the government had made it mandatory for teaching staff to be members of the IfL. Having initially paid membership fees, the government announced in 2009 this would stop, leading to last year's boycott by UCU members.

Mr Sherlock said the first part of the review, which was published in April was to solve this “crisis”, and had succeeded in making IfL membership voluntary.

He added there was no reason why representative organisations, such as the AoC, AELP, and IfL could not “simply come together in the guild”.

Toni Fazaeli, chief executive of the IfL, said: “What was painted was picture of a guild that can draw in the partners, gain the best possible value to support the sector in the best possible way, to be complimentary. In that sense, there's a lot of optimism going forward.”

During the discussion Mr Sherlock said the central conclusion of the report was that further education was not very well defined.

“It needs to sharpen its definition rather than being, as it is at the moment, pretty

much a dumping ground for all those jobs that other people do badly,” he said.

“The result is that instead of having a vocational training sector, which is primarily involved in powering the economy, it's a remedial sector having to cope with around 360,000 kids who leave school each year having failed to attain a level of general education that the government feels is adequate for them to get a decent job.”

He added: “We're suggesting the government needs to make it clear that the primary role of further education in England is occupational training in the service of the economy, and clearly it has a secondary role in terms of life-long learning.”

Mr Sherlock said these roles should be “miles away” from its remedial role.

The panel questioned the practicality of this, however. Mr Doel described it as “very optimistic” and said a college needed to be “what its community wants it to be”.

Ms Fazaeli said: “Aspiration is one thing, reality is another. It's a good aspiration, but in Leicester where I live, for any of the colleges in that locality to say we shouldn't be doing remedial work, what happens to all those thousands of adults and young people who do not have level two English and maths?”

She said it would probably take around 20 or 30 years to get to that stage and that colleges do not only cater for people who have been through the English education system, but also students who have recently arrived to England.

“The emphasis on vocational learning is very important, as is the emphasis on adult and community learning,” she said. “I don't know why there needs to be an almost social class system where one is more important than the other.”



# FE as Lingfield Review is launched



From left: Lord Lingfield with FE Minister Matthew Hancock at the launch of the Lingfield Review

## Calls for a guild, covenant and chartered body

In October Lord Lingfield published his review on professionalism in FE. It suggested the government needed to take a step back and give the sector more responsibility. Among the ideas explored on how to raise standards was the development of a guild, with a covenant and a chartered body. Here are some snippets of what the report said:

### Professionalism in Further Education

**Final Report**  
of the Independent Review Panel

Established by the Minister of  
State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning  
October 2012



### The guild

“The proposed FE guild gives an opportunity to underline the sector’s unity while still recognising its diversity.”

“We would wish to see guild membership as an assurance that both providers and their individual members of staff are committed to ethical behaviour and good citizenship. We hope that the guild will be able to enhance leadership and management across the sector, so that shortages of outstanding candidates to succeed to senior posts will become a thing of the past.”

### The covenant

“Learning from a parallel with the Armed Forces Covenant.... this might be the vehicle for agreement on such matters as the obligation to undertake qualifications and continuing professional development (CPD) among lecturers, and corresponding obligations to give moral and tangible support among employers.”

“The FE covenant might also be the place for expression of a code of professional conduct and those many other matters of mutual interest across the sector which transcend anything that readily can be agreed between the individual employer and its staff.”

### The chartered body

“We suggest that the long record of self-assessment of quality across the sector, a growing commitment to peer review, and developing practices in Ofsted which include freedom from inspection for high-performing providers, combine to make a proposal timely that quality assurance of chartered providers should shift towards independent verification of self-assessment, perhaps by the QAA which we believe may be best suited to the task, leaving Ofsted to focus on low achieving institutions.”



# Provider network event: An inspector

**Chris Henwood**

**@Chris\_Henwood**

Ofsted's new common inspection framework came under the spotlight when providers met for an expert guidance session led by inspector of more than 10 years' experience Megan Whittaker.

Around 35 representatives from a range of providers, including colleges and subcontractors, were at the conference entitled Preparing for Inspection with the new Common Inspection Framework.

The event, which took place at the Goldsmith Centre, in Letchworth Garden City, Herts, opened with an exploration of the differences between the old inspection framework and its successor.

"The main changes are the emphasis on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and on how effective the strategies of improvement are," said Mrs Whittaker, director of Quality for Excellence.

"Teaching, learning and assessment [TLA] have become a limiting grade, with inspectors spending more time reviewing TLA both in traditional classrooms and outside and talking to learners with their work or independent learning providers; and the grade three descriptor is now improvement required.

"There is also strong focus on outcomes relating to progress and progression of different groups of learners; and, a strong focus on destinations into employment and

higher level qualifications."

The new inspection framework was introduced from September following Ofsted's Good Education For All consultation that ended in May.

The framework includes a reduced inspection notice period from three weeks to two days and there will normally be a re-inspection of providers 'requiring improvement' within 12 to 18 months and providers with the grade twice in a row can be judged inadequate on their third inspection if they haven't improved.

Matthew Coffey, national director for learning and skills, said: "Ofsted received hundreds of valuable responses to the Good Education For All consultation enabling us to listen and act on any concerns raised.

"Often learners were more positive about the proposals than many of the providers. In shaping the arrangements for inspection Ofsted has given particular weight to learners as the primary users of the services within the sector."

And at the Letchworth session on the new CIF, which took place on Monday, October 29, Mrs Whittaker, an additional Ofsted inspector since 2000, warned providers to have systems in place to cope with the new framework's shorter notice period.

"The main problem I expect to see with the new framework is the short notice period of inspection," she said.

"Therefore providers need to ensure their improvement planning processes are continually updated as part of the quality

assurance process.

"The inspection team coming in will be looking for where you are now, where you were and where you are heading.

"Tracking systems monitoring learners' progress should be kept updated because a judgment will be made in outcomes asking 'are learners on track to succeed?'"

"Providers should also be keeping current information relating to learner numbers, location of learners, types of provision, for example apprenticeships, community learning, details of contractors, subcontractors and employers.

"Having all this information and keeping it up to date sounds a simple and obvious thing, but it can be something some providers struggle with.

"Another thing to consider is that in relation to workplace learning, there's a requirement to put forward a programme of visits for the inspection team to make a judgment on teaching, learning and assessment, so there needs to be a well-kept weekly diary knowing where assessors will be covering what type of activity.

"Two further issues are that firstly stakeholders such as employers and governors will be involved in an inspection and will need to be included in preparations, and secondly, performance management processes will need to be kept updated at all levels. For example, monitoring of progress against action plans following lesson observation, impact of continuing professional development sessions on teaching practice."

The event, funded by the Learning

and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) through Keits Training Services, was hailed a success by Mrs Whittaker and organiser Anna Morrison, manager of the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Provider Network.

"The main issues raised by providers in the session related to making judgments around teaching learning and assessment both as an organisational process and as an evidence base to make overall judgments for self-assessment," said Mrs Whittaker.

She urged all providers to read Ofsted's How Colleges Improve, from September this year, and also Ofsted's Ensuring Quality in Apprenticeships, which came out last month [October 2012].

"The providers processes ranged in levels of robustness and improvement planning linked to performance management in some were underdeveloped.

"The session had been designed to provide example material to illustrate good practice and many providers identified this as one of the most useful parts of the session."

Miss Morrison said: "I think the event went really well.

"All participants left with an action plan of activities they need in place to help them to prepare for the dreaded 'Thursday morning phone call' and feedback has been extremely positive.

"Megan, our trainer, did a fantastic job in breaking down all of the different evidence requirements into manageable sized activities."



As well as hearing from Megan Whittaker attendees also worked and learned together as a group



# calls time on lack of CIF preparation

## Ofsted additional inspector Megan Whittaker's top five tips for preparing for inspection

1. Self-assessment processes are integral to the organisation and need to include all key processes and areas of work. It should be evidence-based, involve all staff and bring about improvement. Course team management of improvement requires timely information and a good understanding by staff of management information and data.



2. Evaluation of the effectiveness and quality of teaching and learning should be clear, accurate and robust — including any subcontracted provision — and enable swift and sustainable improvements. Review processes to improve teaching, learning and assessment by evaluating and using the views and experiences of learners and employers consistently in planning and delivering teaching, assessment and the curriculum. Be thorough and systematic in sharing and learning from good practice, use information learning technologies (ILT) and their virtual learning environments (VLE) effectively; and make sure learners are on the right course, at the right level, with the right support.

3. Evidence of performance management must be clear and demonstrate impact. Manage underperforming staff effectively by making sure that the college's performance management systems, including those for measuring competency, capability, or both, are fit for purpose, up-to-date and that all staff are fully trained in these aspects.

4. Record and analyse the progression and destinations of learners systematically in order to measure outcomes and improve the curriculum further.

5. Ensure that good continuing professional development is contributing to the development of an 'open classroom culture' and that a wide variety of strategies are being used to develop support and improve practice such as 'learning walks' supported experiments, peer observation, coaching, etc.



Above: Megan Whittaker. From left: Chris Henwood speaks with David Rose, chief executive of Keits Training Services, a workplace learning provider based in Hertfordshire

Photos by Shane Mann



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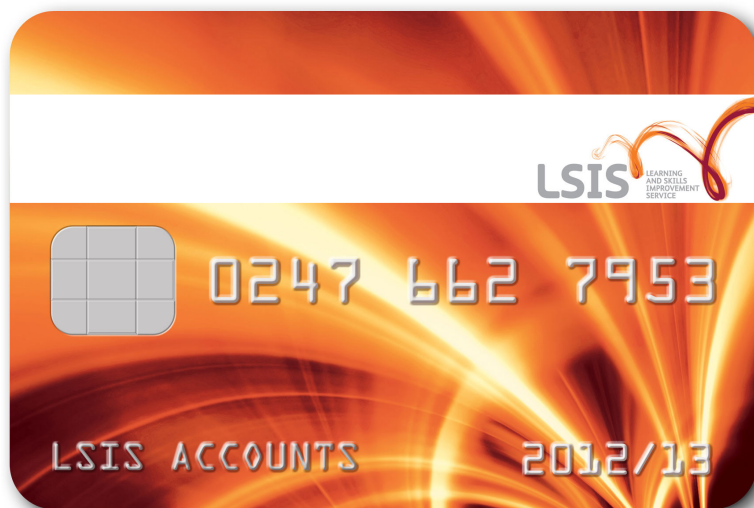
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