

Ctrl-P for first apprenticeship certificate *See page 2*



John Hayes presses print on the first ever apprenticeship certificate, awarded to Tammy Barrow



Pictures by Nick Linford

Monday 30 January 2012

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Government publish FE Choices

FE Week Exclusive

Nick Summers

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Learners think private training providers listen and respond to their views better than general FE colleges, according to analysis by *FE Week*.

Private training providers outscored colleges in every category of the learner satisfaction survey, published online in the 'FE Choices Publication of Outputs', formerly known as the Framework for Excellence, by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).

"Undoubtedly the ratings for independent providers are encouraging," a spokesperson for the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) said.

"The high turn-out of our members at quality improvements events that AELP organises regularly across the regions in partnership with the likes of Ofsted and LSIS demonstrates that there is a real appetite out there to deliver a better service to both learners and employers."

The biggest difference in views were for the learner satisfaction categories titled "listening to learn-

Private providers ahead of FE colleges in government learner satisfaction survey

ers' views" and "acting on learners' views". Private training providers had an average score that was 11 per cent higher than general FE colleges in both categories, based on learners at all age groups.

In particular, private training providers received a satisfaction score that was 13 per cent higher for learners aged between 16 and 18.

The AELP spokesperson added: "The ability to be flexible in response to employer and learner needs is certainly a hallmark of the provision that independent providers are offering. Learners also appreciate the close links that our members have developed with local employers, which obviously counts for a lot in the current economic climate."

Learners aged between 16 and 18 gave private training providers a rating 10 per cent higher than FE colleges based on "how good or bad" they thought they were as an organisation.

In the same category, respondents at all ages gave private training providers a rating seven per cent higher than FE colleges.

A spokesperson for the Associa-

tion of Colleges (AoC) told *FE Week*: "Colleges take the views of their students very seriously, indeed they run their own internal student satisfaction surveys throughout the year to garner such views,"

"The feedback information available on 'FE Choices' is another source of helpful information that can be used by our member colleges and other training providers and we know that individual colleges will be examining the data and thinking about how to further enhance their student experience, or satisfaction levels."

The spokesperson added: "However, a single satisfaction score never tells the full story and does not provide a truly meaningful measurement.

"Great care needs to be taken when making comparisons of this nature, as *FE Week* are doing, as there are so many variables at play; for example, general further education colleges teach and train thousands of students of all different ages on a wide variety of courses, yet they may be being compared here with all training providers, some of

which may only train small groups of 35 people."

Learners rated private training providers eight per cent higher than FE colleges based on the "support" they were given on the programme.

Toni Pearce, vice president (Further Education) at the National Union of Students (NUS), said: "I think it's important to take care when looking at these results, particularly when looking at the differences between different types of providers.

"The difference between private providers and colleges is not entirely surprising, as numbers and experiences between the two are often not comparable.

"It looks as though experiences of learners at colleges do appear to be more consistent."

Learner satisfaction is a performance measure released as part of 'FE Choices' and based on a questionnaire of learners' views.

Questions include the amount of information, advice and guidance given by a provider; the quality of teaching and learning and the learner's overall satisfaction with the programme.

Geoff Russell, chief executive of the SFA, said: "The publication of FE Choices is an important feature of the government's approach to working in partnership with the sector to develop a new sector-led FE Public Information framework."

Private training providers also outscored general FE colleges in the employment rate data published in 'FE Choices'.

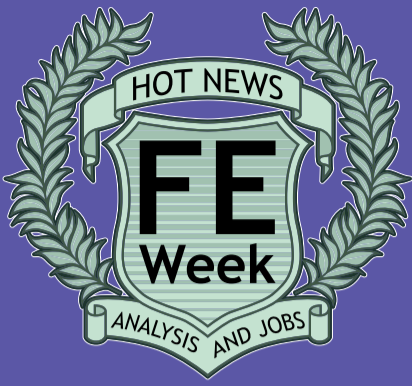
The employment rate, the proportion of learners who completed a LSC-funded programme in 2008/09 and then entered employment by 2009/10, was on average 20 per cent higher in private training providers than in general FE colleges.

Questions have also been raised about the quality of the data published in the 'FE Choices Publication of Outputs'.

Elmfield Training received an average employer satisfaction rating of 2.8 out of 10, despite receiving a seven for "Likelihood to recommend this organisation".

A spokesperson for Elmfield Training said: "On reviewing the detailed information on the gateway we believe there is a problem with the survey data. We have alerted the Skills Funding Agency to this anomaly. They have assured us they will look into the matter."

See our analysis on pages 8 & 9.



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Does satisfactory require improvement?

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Ofsted has announced a consultation which will propose replacing the 'satisfactory' grade with 'requires improvement' for all further education (FE) colleges.

The inspection shake-up follows similar suggestions put forward by the new chief inspector of schools, Sir Michael Wilshaw, in a bid to tackle "coasting schools".

Matthew Coffey, national director of learning and skills at Ofsted (pictured right), said the new rating could be put into effect from September 2012.

Mr Coffey said: "Sir Michael Wilshaw, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, announced on 17 January 2012 his intention to scrap the 'satisfactory' grade for school inspections and to replace it with 'requires improvement'.

"The same arguments for doing so apply to the learning and skills sector as for schools.

"Ofsted will therefore further consult with the sector on making the same change in respect of the grade criteria used for the Common Inspection Framework from September 2012."

Ofsted say they will publish the new inspection arrangements in May, alongside the results of the previous consultation, 'Common Inspection Framework 2012', which ended in November 2011.

The Institute for Learning (IfL) says changing the 'satisfactory' grade will not by itself force colleges to improve.

Toni Fazaeli, IfL's chief executive, said: "Everyone involved in teaching and learning understands that all learners deserve high-quality provision.

"They need to learn in conditions where their teachers and trainers are given proper opportunities and support to continually

develop and improve their practice.

"Changing the satisfactory grade alone will not achieve this."

Ms Fazaeli said adding an additional rating, such as the proposed 'requires improvement', would not be enough to improve the performance of FE colleges.

"We do not believe an additional grade would benefit the sector but, nor would a simple rebrand," she said.

"Ofsted needs to look at how seriously institutions take the development needs and conditions of their teachers and trainers."

She added: "Our members frequently tell us that administrative burdens are a significant barrier to reflecting on and developing their practice as professionals thus inhibiting their ability to update and to try new approaches, fully utilise technology and ultimately improve their practice."

The Association of Colleges (AoC) say they welcome the consultation and want 'satisfactory and improving' to be considered by Ofsted as a new rating.

"We are pleased that Ofsted intends to consult the sector on the proposal to change the grade name from 'satisfactory' to 'requires improvement'," Joy Mercer, director of education policy at the AoC said.

"AoC and partners will respond in full to that consultation; our response will be clear about the number of colleges (including those who have recently merged) on an improvement trajectory."

She added: "As such, there is an argument that 'satisfactory and improving' could be a useful additional judgement (distinct from 'requires improvement')."

"We would also argue that there should be no retrospective re-designation of colleges who were inspected before a proposed change, as this would seem unfair."

Mr Coffey justified Ofsted's proposals and explained the findings of the last annual

report at the EMFEC Centenary Conference, held in Daventry two weeks ago.

Mr Coffey said: "The annual report this year for Ofsted was actually quite hard hitting, and quite hard hitting on the FE and skills sector.

"What we did find, and that may have been lost in translation, is that there is outstanding teaching and learning in colleges, there's outstanding teaching and learning across the board of all that we inspect in learning and skills.

"But of course, without sufficient consistency, that didn't lead to overall outstanding grades for the quality of teaching."

Mr Coffey said previous proposals to scrap the 'satisfactory' grade for schools didn't reference colleges because Sir Michael Wilshaw had "a greater level of comfort" in that area of education.

"Stuck at satisfactory was again a theme which came out of this year's annual report," Mr Coffey said.

"So Michael has chosen to focus in on this in his early days of chief inspector and naturally his schools background have led him to have a greater level of comfort at this moment in time to speak eloquently on those particular subjects."

Forty five colleges, 75 independent learning providers and 11 providers of adult and community learning were judged to be either 'satisfactory' or 'inadequate' in the last annual report published by Ofsted.

Of the 45 colleges, 22 had received the 'satisfactory' grade for two consecutive inspections, with a further 16 receiving the grade for three inspections running.

Mr Coffey said: "There is overwhelming support for us to look down the lens at satisfactory.

"So I am going to come back out to the sector and talk to you about where we see the differences."

The ACE new system for apprenticeships

Nick Reinis
@fenickr

The new online certification system for apprenticeships, designed to reduce bureaucracy and improve quality, has been launched.

Apprenticeship Certificates England (ACE) replaces the paper-based system previously provided by the 25 Sector Skills Councils (SSCs). It cost £120,000 to develop and has been set up by the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils, who will manage the system, with the National Apprenticeship Service.

The cost per certificate is £22, which is lower than the £30 previously charged under the old system, and is defined by three foil seals: bronze, for an intermediate apprenticeship, silver, for an advanced apprenticeship, and gold for a higher apprenticeship.

The Alliance say the new centralised ACE system will save apprenticeship training providers and issuing authorities time, resource and investment and allow them to track the progress of candidates.

Although the cost per certificate has been set, the Alliance say it is "too early to say" if

it will remain the same in the future.

A spokesperson for the Alliance said: "The Alliance will review these costs ongoing as part of the quality assurance processes that have been put in place."

The Alliance has also revealed to FE Week that they could generate £4.4 million from the first year of the new ACE system.

The spokesperson added: "There are approximately 450,000 new apprentices in the system at any one time. However, it is important to note that some of these apprentices will be on three year programmes.

"It is expected that the number of certificates issued in the first year will be around 200,000. The money generated from this will be used to operate the new centralised system and resource the SSCs/SSBs who will be responsible for protecting the integrity of apprenticeship frameworks by checking each certificate request meets requirements of particular apprenticeship frameworks.

"We will keep costs under review and if the number of certificates issued rises. It may be possible to reduce the charge."

The system was launched at the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills

(BIS), by John Hayes, minister for FE who, with the click of a button, printed the first two certificates.

Mr Hayes said: "The government is restoring practical learning to its rightful place as a hallmark of personal attainment and national pride. Apprenticeships are a gold standard qualification and its right that the hard work of people who undertake them should be marked and celebrated."

John Rogers, executive chairman of the Alliance, said: "Apprenticeships play an important role in the provision of a highly skilled workforce in England and it is vital that we ensure individuals have the right skills, at the right time, to ensure they are best-placed to take advantage of the opportunities that arise as the economy continues to recover."

Prior to receiving her award, Tammy Barrow, who received a silver certificate for completing a Level 3 in health, said: "I'm really looking forward to it. I've got the confidence now to study and progress in this field."

Pietro Dirienzo, who passed his Level 2 in plumbing and heating, added: "It's surreal being here. It's all happened so quickly but it's very exciting."

Work Programme at risk of fraud, says NAO

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The government's Work Programme is being exposed to fraud and will help significantly less people than expected to secure a job, a new report has revealed.

The National Audit Office (NAO) says the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is currently running the scheme without the IT systems needed to prevent fraud and administrative errors.

"The Department could be exposed to fraud and error, as the IT support was not ready in time," the report states.

The NAO report, titled 'The introduction of the Work Programme', says the risk of fraud was a consequence of the government trying to introduce the scheme too quickly.

"The pace at which the Department introduced IT for the Programme was out of step with the introduction of the rest of the Programme," the report states.

"The Department decided not to have all of the IT in place for the Programme's start because it considered that waiting would have negated the benefits of the Programme's early adoption."

The Rt Hon Margaret Hodge MP, chair of the Committee of Public Accounts, added: "The rush to get the programme up and running was so great that the supporting IT is still not

in place, even though the programme was launched eight months ago.

"This has led to an increased risk of fraud and error."

The missing IT systems mean the DWP is unable to carry out the automatic checks needed to determine whether people have entered employment, stopped claiming benefits and reached a point where providers should be paid.

The NAO report says at the earliest it won't be until March 2012, 16 months since the programme launched, before the supporting IT will be functioning properly.

"In the period from March to May 2012 there will be a full reconciliation of payments made and providers will have to pay back any claimed inappropriately," the report states.

"In the meantime there is an increased risk of fraud and error."

The DWP will have made payments of roughly £60 million to prime contractors based on manual submissions by the time the IT systems are implemented.

"All payments will be fully validated on the introduction of the IT updates and any incorrect payments will be recovered from validated payments to providers," the DWP spokesperson said.

"As such, we have significant protection in place against this risk – which we consider to be very small."

Stephen Timms MP, Labour's Shadow

Employment Minister, said: "The Secretary of State now has to answer real questions on the implementation of the programme.

"What data is he asking providers to collect to prove that everyone is getting the help they need?"

"What data did he use to make assumptions about performance? Will he use the Merlin Standards to ensure that charities are being shielded from excessive financial risk by prime providers, like he promised?"

The NAO says the scheme will put just over a quarter of claimants who are on Jobseekers Allowance and aged over 25 into employment, compared to government estimates of 40 per cent.

The NAO say the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) "over-optimistic" assumptions, used to set the prices and performance incentives for providers, will make it difficult for providers to meet minimum performance targets.

"If these estimates are too high, prices will have been set too low and providers will find it difficult to meet minimum performance targets and struggle financially," the report states.

The NAO fear the lack of accountability and difficult performance targets will encourage prime contractors to focus on claimants who are easier to employ.

"If the assumptions underpinning our calculation are correct, the performance requirements the Department has set are going to be

considerably more challenging for providers to meet," the report states.

"This increases the risk that they might seek to protect profits through activities such as overlooking harder-to-help claimants."

A spokesperson from the DWP said providers think the targets are "challenging but achievable."

"Our assumptions were based on the best data available and were subject to rigorous scrutiny and challenge by both the Treasury and independently by KPMG," the spokesperson said.

"In their bids, providers promised performance higher than DWP performance assumptions and they confirmed to the NAO they think the targets they have set themselves are challenging but achievable."

The spokesperson added: "This confidence is demonstrated by the fact that they have invested £580m of their own funds into the Work Programme."

Amyas Morse, head of the NAO, said: "The Department has set providers stretching performance targets and it needs to ensure that they do not cut corners to stay in profit, such as targeting easy to reach people, reducing service levels or treating sub-contractors unfairly."

The Department estimates the Work Programme will cost between £3 billion and £5 billion over the next five years, helping up to 3.3 million people.

Funding Agency go back to Bolt

Nick Reinis
@fenickr

The former head of funding policy at the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is to return on secondment from KPMG.

John Bolt led the development of the current funding methodologies while working at the LSC, before taking retirement and joining the global advisory giant KPMG, where he is a specialist in advisory services to education.

A statement released to *FE Week* by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) read: "John Bolt is being seconded to the Agency by KPMG, to support the development of funding rates, which forms part of the work we are doing to simplify the funding system."

The SFA replaced the LSC in April 2010.

Mr Bolt is a senior manager at KPMG where he provides advisory services to education, particularly with the funding of post-16 learning.

He is well known for his knowledge of FE funding and worked in FE colleges for 25 years at a variety of levels, from main-grade teacher to vice-principal.

He joined KPMG after retiring from eight years as Head of Funding Policy Implementation at the national office of the LSC.

He was the technical lead for the LSC's 'Demand-Led' funding approach that was implemented from 2008.

In the same year, Mr Bolt was awarded a lifetime achievement award by the Association of Colleges for his contribution to FE.



The SFA is currently working through its project to streamline the funding system, which includes a single funding methodology for the Adult Skills Budget.

It also includes the introduction of a standard 'rates matrix' to replace more than 6,000 different funding rates, moving from a funding system that requires detailed information on the number of teaching hours to one that is transparent and enables providers to choose the right mode of delivery for the learner.

The SFA was due to issue shadow rates matrix and funding calculations, but at the time of going to press *FE Week* understands this has not yet happened.

As previously reported, dual-running of the current and new simplified funding systems is due to take place in 2012/13, with full implementation in 2013/14.

KPMG and Mr Bolt declined to comment when approached by *FE Week*.

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TRIBAL



The merits of an FE loans system debated

Nick Summers

@SummersNicholas

The FE loans system proposed by government has been criticised by the leaders of three key membership bodies.

David Hughes, chief executive of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), Martin Doel, chief executive of the Association of Colleges (AoC) and Paul Warner, director of employment and skills at the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), say they're concerned with the government's proposals.

"The whole Level 3 and FE loans debate, I think, has been very shallow and very limited," Mr Hughes said.

"I just don't think we've got into the detail of it at all really."

The three leaders debated the implications of the FE loans system, during a discussion on the sector as a whole at the EMFEC Centenary Conference.

The new system proposed by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) will require learners aged 24 and above to take out a

loan if they wish to study at level 3 or 4.

Students will be affected by the loans system from the 2013/14 academic year and begin repayments once they have left the course and started earning more than £21,000.

Mr Hughes said: "A lot of the Level 3 qualifications we know don't give the return and some of those are the sorts of qualifications, in care for instance, it's very likely isn't it that we're going to say to people, here's a Level 3, you can do it, you'll probably never earn over £21,000 if you stay in the job that this qualification qualifies you for."

"Is that good, or is that bad?"

Mr Hughes added: "People sit with the debt for 30 years before it gets written off."

"The implications of that in terms of who gets recruited and who wants to actually take on that debt...there are all sort of issues that we need to address."

The Student Loans Company (SLC) will be in charge of assessing all FE loans applications and make initial payments to the college or training organisation on behalf of the learner.

A final Impact Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment of FE Loans is expected from BIS before April 2012.

Mr Warner, meanwhile, said the sector was "sleepwalking" into an FE loans system which had been created in reaction to the economic crisis.

"It does look like a reaction to where we are at the moment," Mr Warner said.

"If it is seen somehow as the right and durable thing to do in the longer term, that isn't clear at all, and that argument isn't really being had."

He added: "It almost feels like the sector is sleepwalking into FE loans."

"Again, I'm not really understanding quite why we're doing it beyond the view at a fairly shallow level that it's where we are at, there is no money, we've got to get money somewhere, and that's the way we can get out of it for the moment."

Mr Warner emphasised that it was important to ask how the FE loans system would sit alongside existing funding models, as well as its on-going impact on the sector.

"If it's here for the longer term, we do need to understand why is it here, what is it going to do and how it is going to fit into the landscape," Mr Warner said.

"None of that is really being debated."

The government has provided a budget of £129 million for FE loans in the 2013/14 financial year, with a further £398 million for 2014/15.

Mr Doel said the FE loans system looked like "the least worst alternative" for the FE sector.

Mr Doel said: "A wake up and smell the coffee moment is, if the alternative is a lovely loan scheme for post-25, or no investment for post-25, an FE loans scheme suddenly looks a bit better than it would have done."

"There is always an on-going and sensible argument for more resources for things that matter, so it's never a closed conversation about more money in order to do things."

"But if there is no more money, and life is difficult at present time as we all know, then an FE loans scheme probably looks the least worst alternative at this stage."

Mr Doel also said the FE loans system had been drawn up far too quickly by government.

"This has been done at a completely disreputable speed, which things are done within our sector," he said.

"That's why things don't endure, it fails the competency test on any number of levels of introduction, so I think we need to think that through."



Pictured above from left to right: Paul Warner, AELP, David Hughes, NIACE, and Martin Doel, AoC, at the EMFEC Centenary Conference in Daventry

AoC survey reveals a 'worrying' drop in low level learners

Nick Reinis

@fenickr

Worrying trends have been revealed in the recruitment of Level 1 and Entry Level students.

In their latest survey on 16-18 recruitment, the Association of Colleges (AoC) has found Level 1 learner numbers declined by 6.6 per cent and Entry Level figures by around 6.4 per cent on last year.

The data was collected from 231 institutions enrolling more than 530,000 young people aged 16-18. It shows overall 16-18 year old learner numbers in the sample declined by 1.78 per cent between 2010/11 and 2011/12.

However, the recruitment pattern was

varied, with more than 41 per cent of colleges reporting an increase in enrolment numbers and around 59 per cent a decline.

AoC chief executive Martin Doel said the survey "gives us the most detailed picture yet of recruitment among colleges from September 2011 onwards and allows us to make some valuable conclusions".

Mr Doel also said the autumn term recruitment drive of colleges "appears to have had a positive impact on enrolment" and that the decline of less than two per cent is consistent with earlier studies.

However, he added: "Worryingly, however, the trends related to Level 1 and Entry Level students that were identified in earlier versions of this survey, echoed in the latest statistics about young people not in education or training, continue."

"The drop in the number of students leaving school with low levels of qualifications starting at college this year has been the most dramatic, even if it has improved since the previous study."

"In addition, the decline is steeper in the most deprived areas of the country."

"If these young people are not studying at college then they are most likely to drop out of education altogether because most schools do not provide the types of courses they need, and work-based learning routes like apprenticeships are closed to them."

The task now, Mr Doel said, is identifying the reasons behind the figures.

Mr Doel added: "Although the recruitment picture is clearer it is, sadly, less obvious as to what is driving this decline in enrolments among those students leaving school with the

least qualifications.

"Our members tell us that the loss of the Connexions service and the erosion of independent advice and guidance is likely to have had a significant impact, as have, say members, local authority transport cuts and the disappearance of the Education Maintenance Allowance."

"Students' worries about employment prospects and higher education costs may also be a stumbling block to aspiration."

In the meantime, Mr Doel wants the government to continue to work with the AoC and its partners to understand "cause and effect" in the behaviours of the age group.

He said: "In tandem, we believe that there is a need for a more co-ordinated policy programme across Government departments, predicated on robust research."

FE Week profile

Helena Kennedy ~ her story

Janet Murray

@jan_murray

Helena Kennedy QC talks to FE Week

“This is no misery memoir,” says the Labour peer and barrister Helena Kennedy of her upbringing in the south side of Glasgow. Raised in a two-room and kitchen tenement, with her parents, aunt and three sisters, there may have not been much money around, but there was plenty of love.

As part of a large, close-knit Catholic family, there were endless family gatherings and cousins to play with. And in the multicultural south side of Glasgow, home, amongst others, to Italians, Poles and Lithuanians, there was a strong sense of community.

There were two great influences in Kennedy’s life - the Labour Party and the Catholic Church – both of which helped foster a strong sense of responsibility towards others.

She recalls her mother helping women who were married to alcoholics, others who had been beaten by their husbands. “They [my parents] had nothing to put on the table and my mother would go to the cupboard and find something,” she says.

Despite being “working class people” who hadn’t had the opportunities to further their own education, Kennedy’s parents had a high regard for learning. Her father, who she describes as “a wonderful man,” was a newspaper packer and trade unionist who “went to the library every week” and took a keen interest in politics.

Being a teenager in the 1960s (rather than the 1950s as her older sisters had been) made all the difference to the opportunities available to her, she says. While her sisters left school at 15, one to become a typist, the other to join the civil service, Kennedy chose to stay on at school and go to university.

Moving down to London to study Law was exhilarating but hard, she says, and there were many times when she was “on her uppers,” struggling to make ends meet.

Things were particularly tough during her pupillage (the final stage of training to be a barrister) and Kennedy recalls begging her bank manager to lend her some money. “I remember going to the Bank of Scotland but because I was a woman they wouldn’t give me an overdraft.

This was in the 1970s remember, and they didn’t believe I was going to be a barrister.”

An offer of help came from an unlikely source – the father of her boyfriend at the time, a Conservative MP, who said that if she moved to his bank he would guarantee her an overdraft. In the event, having convinced her new bank manager that she had a bright future ahead of her, she didn’t need to accept his offer – but his willingness to help made a

lasting impression on her.

Her anxiety about borrowing money is something that is still experienced by working class young people today, she says. And with tuition fees set to rise to up to £9k a year from the autumn, what is still not understood by policy makers is that this fear can be paralysing for young people from working class backgrounds.

The argument that under the new fee regime, loans can be paid back later or over a longer period time might make sense for “people with safety nets, who have parents who own their home,” but for those who don’t, the idea of debt can be “intimidating and frightening,” she says.

Kennedy’s interest in widening participation grew when she was asked to be on the National Commission for Education in 1995, where she ended up chairing the debate on further and higher education and became “quite annoyed” about what was going on in FE.

After the incorporation of colleges in 1993, which freed them up from local authority control, lots of colleges became so busy competing with each other, “compensatory education” – offering second chances to those who hadn’t got the best out of their schooling – dropped off the agenda, says Kennedy.

Her influential report Learning Works set out a radical vision to change that, drawing those kinds of learners back into education and breaking the cycle of economic and social exclusion.

It also planted the seed of an idea that would eventually become the educational charity known as the Helena Kennedy Foundation.

“My job was to tap well-to-do people on the shoulder and ask them for money”

The idea for a foundation for young people in the further and higher education sectors came from the influential college principal Ann Limb, who recognised that moving from colleges to university could be a particular challenge for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Kennedy’s job was to “tap well-to-do people on the shoulder” and ask them for money, and having started off with just one bursary in 2000, the charity now offers 150 a year.

Kennedy admits she has “learned on the job” with one of the most important lessons being that social capital – that is having access to the right kind of advice and connections – can be just as important as money. “I see it all around me with the children of my friends, as well as my own – we all know people. And children from



ordinary backgrounds don’t know anyone.”

But for young people from working class backgrounds, the idea of moving in different circles can in itself be intimidating, she says, recalling her own experiences when she first moved down to London to study law. In her first few months, she had to slow down her strong Scottish accent (which she has retained and says has been an “asset at the bar”) to make herself understood. “They would actually talk over me and go ‘What did she say?’” she recalls, with indignation.

She quickly realised that these young men (and they were, she says pointedly, mostly men) with the ‘ya ya’ public school voices were not as clever as they appeared. “It took me a while to realise that it was all purely cosmetic. It was all learned confidence and when you got beyond it, they were either less smart than you first thought or less confident. It was a veneer.

“But it was a veneer of polish that gets people a long way, something independent schools can give people.”

So does she agree with the Sutton Trust, a charity that helps to provide educational opportunities for pupils from non-privileged backgrounds, which said recently that the

state should help fund places for bright children from poor backgrounds at the best private schools?

Her reaction is cautious. “I think we have to be very careful about taking steps that would actually lead to too high or too early selection and not having really clear opportunities for people to move between systems. One of the problems is – and I’ve seen it with my own three children – is that that people develop at different stages...and you have to have really open and flexible systems of education to make that possible.”

What continues to motivate her in her work as a barrister, broadcaster and campaigner she says, is a belief in social justice, fairness and a vision of a more equal society. Having experienced, first hand, the transformative nature of education, she is passionate about offering that opportunity to others.

“I think for me it is the fact that education changed my life...I want people to be liberated and to be free to make choices in their lives and to be able to stretch themselves and to be able to have that bigger experience and to know what makes the world tick – and for me, that’s what education did. And I want that to be available to my kind of folk.”

FE Week Expert

The meaning of freedom



of, who is accountable for what? If all providers specialise in what they do well, the danger is that the most problematic or specialist bit doesn't get done. How do we retain the broadest choice of provision the government expects of us working together? Which is why LSIS is engaged in these conversations - to help providers work together in determining what stages they need to go through, reconsider their future role and improve their understanding of what a community needs. This will help them define more clearly their role and decide what they are best-placed to provide.

This gives us a chance to connect and to:

- understand the new freedoms
- talk to other governors about how freedoms can be deployed
- do it side by side with chief executives
- put community, voter, citizen at the heart of the service
- learn from other professional practices and
- give providers the chance to open up their doors

There will be different answers in different places and our job will be to help colleges and other providers through and point where others have had a go and succeeded. We have already kicked things off with research into the different range of organisations and understanding what is happening at the moment. The AoC is just completing research into community engagement. New ideas are burgeoning such as the creation of the entrepreneurial college enshrined in the recently-formed Gazelle Group.

It is important when considering change to allow colleges and other providers, within reason, to move at their own pace. We are in a world where some move faster than others, some are middling, while others are late adopters. We will find that some of the things people attempt don't work. It is just as important to identify what doesn't work as what does. Also geography matters; things will work in some areas but not in others.

There is a big role working with governors. If we can demonstrate that working in a more collegiate and collective manner results in overall improvement, that will be a good message. However, we have to recognise that it may not always be so; others may find a more centralised and highly focused approach can deliver. As to the timescale, we will want to see the sector taking freedoms up throughout 2012-13. However, it's a long haul and needs the policy stability promised by the Government in New Challenges, New Chances, its response to their consultations with the sector.

This will work if people believe it can happen. So we will constantly monitor and respond to developments, carry out research, disseminate the various models and support innovation. But above all, we won't be "telling" people what to do because it's not that sort of world any more.

Rob Wye is Chief Executive of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS)

Colleges and other providers are promised significant new freedoms by the coalition government in the way they are governed and managed. So, what does this mean in practice? For example, if colleges are free and can have whatever governing arrangements they like, where does that leave capital assets and to whom do they belong if the college goes bust? We will be holding a range of conversations with principals and chairs of governors in the coming months to flesh out what "freedom" means, consider the limits of what can be done and explore the options for change.

Do providers go for mutualisation, joint governance, retaining the status quo or a form of governance yet to be envisaged? There are so many possibilities for freedom around and we know a whole set of possible governing arrangements will spring up. In partnership with the AoC, the 157 Group and NIACE, we will help providers find the best way forward. We will also scrutinise what's working and what is not working. Some things are, or should be, a given in exchange for those freedoms and some of these are spelled out in NIACE's recent report Colleges in their Communities. How do colleges and others engage the community, decide what is required and design what is needed?

One key role of governors after all is to look after the community assets - the fabric, buildings and learning provision - protect them for future generations and make best use of them now. There will be others around the table in the conversation including the AELP. It could be argued that although the college is the biggest player in the community, it might want to cede a particular area of work to a training provider. There will be a lot of horse-trading to do and the overriding aim must be to drive up performance by having each organisation focus on the bits they do best.

Some colleges are already doing this; for example, they might concentrate on the vocational and hand A-levels to schools and Sixth Form Colleges. There is evidence that the generalist approach to FE doesn't necessarily work well and so, with the help of John Hayes, the FE and skills minister, we will be looking further at the definition of adult further education. We have already seen excellent examples of community focus in areas such as Oldham and Luton.

However, this raises an interesting question

Further Education: the heart of post 14 learning?



programmes for this group of students.

The students, who have branded themselves the 'Energy League' linked to the Humber's focus on renewables, engage in all of the core national curriculum subjects as well as having been able to select a vocational option of their choice. When asked, Energy League students described their experience as 'awesome!'.

The students in the Energy League however are not registered at the college since there is ambiguity in the legal framework for registering students pre-16; something we hope the Department for Education will make a positive announcement on imminently.

The Group will be opening a Studio School on its Hull site in September 2012, creating opportunities for even more young people to experience this rich, but balanced learning offer.

The Group expects this to widen opportunities and choices for alternative full time learning routes at 14; young people currently have this choice reserved until they reach 16.

Are these the approaches Wolf had in mind when she recommended that colleges should be enabled to enrol young people pre-16, offering them a full key stage four programme?

Studio schools will provide a great opportunity for young people at 14 to engage with a curriculum focusing on employability, work placed learning alongside a focus on core GCSEs in English and Maths. It sounds very closely aligned to the role that many colleges play in their community already.

Arguably, as we expect young people to remain in learning for longer, we should equally enable them to choose their pathway much sooner, increasing the opportunity for that choice to have maximum impact.

The studio school will be a separate arm of the college, with its own legal structure; but will of course be able to benefit from the excellent physical facilities and shared services on site.

The Hull College Group welcomes the 157 Group report on information advice and guidance and hopes that emerging policy will fully take account of the need for all young people making life changing choices have the information they need to do so.

We're confident with the right information and our existing track record in delivery, young people will definitely see their local FE college as their first choice at 14 full-time.

Gary Warke is deputy chief executive and deputy principal of Hull College Group

When Professor Wolf published her report in March 2011 she made a number of key recommendations that would crystallise the role of further education colleges in becoming a real option for young people at 14.

Of course the caveats that there should be a focus on quality, that the curriculum should be balanced with meaningful academic and vocational qualifications being studied, and that parents and students should know about the equivalencies all applied. But ostensibly this was a report to be welcomed within the sector.

The Hull College Group has been expanding its role in delivering high quality education to young people from age 14. In an average week the group of colleges, across Hull, Goole and Harrogate engages some 1500 14-16 year olds in learning.

"The college is increasingly becoming a real option for young people and is not a last chance opportunity."

Inevitably the college caters for those young people who for a number of reasons have decided that school is not for them; but is increasingly becoming a real option for young people to select as a full time route and is not a last chance opportunity.

In 2011 the college welcomed almost 80 year 10 pupils full time from the east of the city of Hull, following the planned closure of their secondary school. In partnership with the local authority the college has developed a diverse range of academic and vocational

FE Week Expert

A chance for change at Skills Funding Agency



The announcement of the retirement of the head of the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the head of the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) on the same day is a remarkable co-incidence.

Those inclined towards conspiracy theories may read more into it and see it as a clear sign of impending reorganisation; a merger of the two bodies perhaps or some significant transfer of functions.

Even if it is just a coincidence, however, it is

still a useful one since it gives an opportunity to think about reconfiguring as well as reappointing.

There are several reasons why some reconfiguration might be on the agenda. Firstly, the apprenticeship programme exists in a pretty cluttered landscape. The basic programme involves two departments of state and two overlapping quangos in the SFA and NAS: consideration of pre-apprenticeship programmes must involve a third quango - the YPLA.

Higher apprenticeships bring in HEFCE and will on current policy involve the student loan company as well. As the 157 Group has pointed out, a young person could work with the same college and same employer from pre-apprenticeship to a higher apprenticeship programme, but their progression would involve seven different funding agencies - the two departments and their five non-departmental bodies.

Reorganisation might also be driven by valid grounds for concern about the current delivery of the apprenticeship programme. An enthusiasm to meet targets has clearly overridden a concern to focus apprenticeship funding where it matters. It must be wrong that a majority of apprenticeships for young people last for less than 12 months; the rapid

expansion of short programmes for existing adult employees in areas such as retail and customer care risks doing serious damage to the apprenticeship brand. Those responsible have been slow to pick up and challenge so-called apprenticeships that do not involve real employment. Yet the tangled landscape of public bodies means that between the minister, his department, the SFA and the NAS it is difficult to determine exactly who is responsible for these shortcomings. We can anticipate the forthcoming select committee enquiry will struggle to do so.

A merger of the SFA and NAS would be one step towards simplifying the system but it is not ideal. There is a strong argument that current difficulties derive in part from putting a programme that should be about progressing young people into skilled employment into a quango focussed on adult skills. The problems with adult apprenticeships closely resemble those of the Train to Gain programme or the Employer Training Pilots or indeed the earlier experiment with Learning Accounts - too great a concern to achieve rapid growth in numbers with too little concern over the value of what was offered to the trainees and too little concern with value for money for the taxpayer. The SFA and its predecessor bodies 'have form' on this issue as they say.

Perhaps the answer therefore would be

to be more ambitious and combine both SFA and NAS with HEFCE. As well as potentially making it easier to develop higher apprenticeships, combining all three BIS agencies in this way gives scope for some internal realignment distinguishing initial education and training from continuing education for adults. On the one side there could be full time higher education, full time FE and apprenticeships, reflecting Alison Wolf's view that apprentices are essentially students in a work based setting. On the other there would be upskilling or re-skilling for adult employees, whether delivered through FE colleges, higher education institutions, or, as is currently fashionable, through employers.

Initial education and training would focus on giving young people a broad base of skills and knowledge to equip them for a lifetime of work; continuing education would focus on skill shortages and employers' more immediate concerns. Initial education would be funded by a mixture of grants and loans applied on a consistent basis across all levels; and continuing education would be largely co-funded and increasingly owned and funded by employers themselves.

Conspiracy theorists should keep a close eye on HEFCE.

Mick Fletcher is a Consultant on Further Education

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FE Week gets technical

FE Week brings you a selection of performance indicator scores from the FE Choices (formerly Framework for Excellence) website. For the full data set visit: <http://fechoices.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/>

Learner Satisfaction

16-18 year-olds	All Private Sector Public Funded			All General FE College incl. Tertiary			All organisations			Private Sector less General FE
	Lowest	Middle	Highest	Lowest	Middle	Highest	Lowest	Middle	Highest	Middle
Prior Information	5.8	8.2	10	6.5	7.6	9.3	5.8	7.8	10	0.6
Help in the first few weeks	5.8	8.2	10	6.5	7.6	9.3	5.3	8.2	10	0.6
Teaching/Training	6	8.6	10	6.7	7.9	9.2	5.7	8.2	10	0.7
Respect from staff	6.5	8.9	10	6.9	8.1	9.5	6.5	8.5	10	0.8
Advice on what to do next	5	7.9	10	6.3	7.4	9	4.5	7.6	10	0.5
Support	6.3	8.7	10	6.8	7.9	9.4	6.3	8.3	10	0.8
Listening to learners' views	6.5	8.6	10	5.9	7.3	9.2	5.9	8	10	1.3
Acting on learners' views	5.8	8.4	10	5.8	7.1	9	5.1	7.8	10	1.3
How good or bad is this organisation	6.2	8.7	10	6	7.7	9.4	6	8.2	10	1.0

19+ (Adults)	All Private Sector Public Funded			All General FE College incl. Tertiary			All organisations			Private Sector less General FE
	Lowest	Middle	Highest	Lowest	Middle	Highest	Lowest	Middle	Highest	Middle
Prior Information	4	8.6	9.7	6.9	8.1	9.3	4.0	8.3	9.7	0.5
Help in the first few weeks	4	8.6	9.7	6.9	8.1	9.3	6.0	8.6	9.8	0.5
Teaching/Training	7	8.9	9.8	7.3	8.6	9.4	7.0	8.8	9.8	0.3
Respect from staff	7	9.3	9.9	7.7	8.9	9.7	7.0	9.1	9.9	0.4
Advice on what to do next	6	8.3	9.7	6.4	8	9.5	6.0	8.1	9.7	0.3
Support	7	9	9.8	7.5	8.6	9.7	7.0	8.8	9.8	0.4
Listening to learners' views	7	9	9.8	7.5	8.6	9.7	7.0	8.8	9.8	0.4
Acting on learners' views	4	8.8	9.7	6.3	7.9	9.1	4.0	8.3	9.7	0.9
How good or bad is this organisation	6.6	9	9.9	7.2	8.3	9.7	6.6	8.7	9.9	0.7

All age	All Private Sector Public Funded			All General FE College incl. Tertiary			All organisations			Private Sector less General FE
	Lowest	Middle	Highest	Lowest	Middle	Highest	Lowest	Middle	Highest	Middle
Prior Information	6.6	8.4	9.7	6.6	7.9	9.3	6.6	8.1	9.7	0.5
Help in the first few weeks	6.6	8.4	9.7	6.6	7.9	9.3	6.8	8.5	9.8	0.5
Teaching/Training	6.9	8.7	9.8	6.8	8.3	9.2	6.8	8.5	9.8	0.4
Respect from staff	7.3	9.2	9.9	7.1	8.6	9.5	7.1	8.9	9.9	0.6
Advice on what to do next	6.4	8.2	9.7	6.4	7.7	9.1	6.4	7.9	9.7	0.5
Support	7	8.9	9.8	6.8	8.3	9.5	6.8	8.6	9.8	0.6
Listening to learners' views	6.3	8.9	9.8	6	7.8	9.3	6	8.3	9.8	1.1
Acting on learners' views	5.7	8.7	9.7	5.8	7.6	9	5.7	8.1	9.7	1.1
How good or bad is this organisation	6.5	8.8	9.9	6.1	8.1	9.5	6.1	8.5	9.9	0.7

All ages	All Private Sector Public Funded			All General FE College incl. Tertiary			All organisations			Private Sector less General FE
	Lowest	Middle	Highest	Lowest	Middle	Highest	Lowest	Middle	Highest	Middle
2010/11	6.8	8.7	9.7	6.5	8.1	9.3	6.5	8.4	9.7	0.6
2009/10	7.2	8.7	9.8	7.5	8.2	8.8	7.2	8.4	9.8	0.5

The scores above are based on answers from learners to the Learner Views survey, which asked about their experience of the provider. The lowest possible rating was 0 (very bad), whilst the highest was 10 (very good).

Where there are low numbers of learners/trainees who have responded, care must be taken when using this information as the response of one learner/trainee can make a large difference to the score.

Employer Satisfaction

All age	All Private Sector Public Funded			All General FE College incl. Tertiary			All organisations			Private Sector less General FE
	Lowest score	Middle score	Highest score	Lowest score	Middle score	Highest score	Lowest score	Middle score	Highest score	Middle
2010/11	2.8	8.1	9.8	6	7.7	9.1	2.8	7.9	9.8	0.4
2009/10	6.3	8.3	9.5	6.8	7.9	8.9	6.3	8.1	9.5	0.4

The score above is based on answers from employers to the Employer Views survey, which asked about their experience when they sent staff for training. The lowest possible rating was 0 (very poor), whilst the highest was 10 (excellent).

The Skills Funding Agency say "the scores calculated for each learning provider will enable them to make comparisons about their performance against other learning providers of the same type and against all learning providers who completed the survey and passed the necessary quality thresholds.

Learner Destinations

All age	All Private Sector Public Funded			All General FE College incl. Tertiary			All organisations			Private Sector less General FE
	Lowest score	Middle score	Highest score	Lowest score	Middle score	Highest score	Lowest score	Middle score	Highest score	Middle
2009/10	50%	82%	99%	70%	82%	90%	50%	83%	99%	0

The figures above represent the percentage of learners who in 2009/10 experienced employment/learning benefits after completing their course

This is the estimated percentage of learners who progressed into or within further or higher education, found a job or improved their career prospects after completing their course. The score is based on data matching, telephone interviews and statistical projections.

Learning Rate

All age	All Private Sector Public Funded			All General FE College incl. Tertiary			All organisations			Private Sector less General FE
	Lowest score	Middle score	Highest score	Lowest score	Middle score	Highest score	Lowest score	Middle score	Highest score	Middle
2008/09	3%	41%	83%	29%	57%	81%	3%	55%	91%	-16%

The figures above represent the percentage of learners who went into further or higher education in 2009/10

The score is based on a combination of data matching and answers from learners who were telephoned during the Learner destinations survey

The Learning rate is the proportion of in-scope learners (minus the projected number of neutrals) completing an LSC-funded programme in 2007/08 that progressed to one of the following destinations in 2008/09:

- enrolled in priority learning with the same level of highest learning aim;
- enrolled in 16-18 priority learning;
- progressed to learning with a higher level of highest learning aim

Employment rate

All age	All Private Sector Public Funded			All General FE College incl. Tertiary			All organisations			Private Sector less General FE
	Lowest score	Middle score	Highest score	Lowest score	Middle score	Highest score	Lowest score	Middle score	Highest score	Middle
2008/09	19%	67%	85%	23%	47%	65%	13%	48%	85%	20%

The Employment rate above is the proportion of in-scope learners (minus the projected number of neutrals) completing a LSC-funded programme in 2008/09 that are projected to have progressed to one of the following destinations in 2009/10:

- remained in employment or self-employment, with improved job security, income, skills or enhanced career prospects;
- entered employment or self-employment, having been in learning prior to the completion year where the completion year's learning had a positive impact; or
- entered employment, self-employment or training, having previously been outside the labour market.

FE Week campus round-up

Labour leader takes tour of Harlow College



Labour party leader Ed Miliband used a visit to Harlow College to call for the creation of more apprentices.

Mr Miliband said: "Britain needs more apprentices. Any contract that government is awarding to a major employer should be on the condition that they provide apprenticeships."

"It's a simple, basic thing. But, frankly you're not being a good citizen as a business...you're not being a good business, if you think you can get a government contract and not provide apprenticeships, not help train the next generation. You've got to show your responsibilities."

Mr Miliband also enjoyed a short tour of the college, escorted by apprentice student

Michael Travers, and full-time catering student, Georgina Georgio. He visited the college's hairdressing and beauty department and then went on to visit students in the science laboratories.

Mr Miliband's visit concluded with a Q&A session. His audience was made-up of Harlow College students and staff, local business people and community leaders.

Ben Murray (21) an engineering apprentice introduced Mr Miliband to the audience. Ben said: "I was pleased to be asked to do this, you have to take these opportunities when they come."

As Mr Miliband took the floor, he said; "Thank you for having us. This is a fantastic college."

Walsall College wins best practice award



Walsall College shared best practice with colleges across the country after winning an Association of Colleges Beacon Award.

The college's functional skills team won the award for adopting innovative approaches to teaching the functional skills of English, maths and ICT within all of its vocational areas, which has led to a significant improvement to success of learners.

During the day, representatives had the opportunity to find out how the college achieved such high standards in functional skills. Susan Salter, from award sponsors OCR, attended on the day to present the college with a cheque for the cash prize of £5,000, to enhance the project further.

Walsall College will also be officially presented with their Award by John Hayes, minister for further education, skills and lifelong learning, at a national presentation ceremony, due to be held at Westminster in February.

Jan Myatt, curriculum manager for functional skills said: "Winning the AoC Beacon Award for Skills was a great achievement."

Doncaster College rewards its staff

James Vernon has become the first recipient of the Professional Recognition Award by Doncaster College to its staff.

The Awards were launched in late 2011, to recognise the professional contribution that staff make towards the work of the college. The award will be given three times a year so a member of staff will be honoured once a term.

Mr Vernon (23), a field support engineer from Central IT Services, has won the award for the autumn term.

Nominees said Mr Vernon was "patient, empathetic and always pleasant and professional when helping people, regardless of how busy he is. He always takes time to listen and will go out of his way to find a solution and provide feedback."

Mr Vernon, from Westwoodside, near Doncaster, has worked at the college for 11 months, said: "It was an honour to be the first to receive the Award and I'd say to anyone who wants to win it just do what you enjoy otherwise you won't put the effort in."

Rotherham College students stay safe in style



Students have been making road safety fashionable at an event selling bespoke clothing to help keep young people visible during dark nights.

Rotherham College of Arts and Technology has teamed up with South Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership to increase road safety awareness amongst students by selling adapted fashion items they would wear during a night out.

Funded by the partnership, the Level 3 Fashion students hosted an event selling their own high visibility garments which they designed and produced to help keep fellow students safe when out and about.

The students project-managed the event,

from the accounting and budgeting, to the ordering of materials and the production of the items.

Caroline Bell, curriculum leader in fashion and design said: "This was great experience."

"Not only was this a challenge to come up with fashionable safety items which younger people would wear, but their business skills have also been put to the test and have improved greatly."

Joe Hockney, road safety officer from Sheffield Council, working on behalf of the South Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership said: "Working with the college has been a great way of raising road safety awareness with the students involved."

IT students turn their hands to teaching for Chesterfield College 50+ mentoring project

Chesterfield College students have been tutoring members of Derbyshire County Council's 50+ Forum in all things computer for the past six weeks.

Gill Clarke, intergenerational practice officer at the council, formed the collaboration with learners studying on the BTEC Diploma for IT Practitioners course and her 50+ Forum have been meeting for one-to-one tutelage.

Last week the group received their certificates of achievement from the students.

She said: "This is the second year the council and the college have collaborated on

an Intergenerational IT mentoring project.

"The members of the Chesterfield 50+ forum who attended said they had found the experience invaluable.

"Many of them also commented that it had been better than other classes they attended as they had their own personal tutor and were able to learn anything they wanted to know about IT.

"The older group were also extremely impressed with the patience and knowledge of the young people they met through this project."



City College Brighton and Hove puts film students behind bars and behind the camera



City College Brighton and Hove students from a range of different courses have collaborated on a new film project at the City College East campus.

Film-making students were given the chance to pitch their own short film ideas - all of which had to have a prison-based theme - to the rest of their class.

The three most popular ideas are now in production on set with their creators as directors.

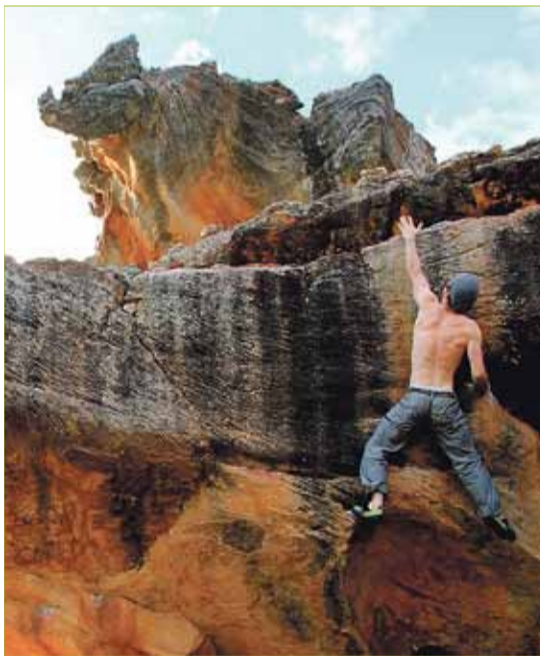
To provide the sets for the films, painting and decorating students built a small prison cell set with adjoining corridor out of wooden frames, creating a brick-work effect on prison walls and doors with incredible detail.

Film students then decorated the bare set to look more natural with paint, graffiti on walls and even a suitably grim toilet.

College drama students and local actors have now been enlisted to star in the films, giving them vital on-set experience.

Film-making student Jordan Khan (19), director of the short film Food for Thought, said: "With these sets, we've got something that we wouldn't normally have access to and having industry-standard equipment to work with, it really gives the project a professional edge."

Fellow-director Emmet Holmes-Boyes (20) said: "I've had a chance to develop key skills I feel will be needed to succeed in the world of film."



Journalism student climbs the career ladder with 'invaluable' help from Cornwall College

A journey around Central Asia on a horse, a trip through Armenia's deepest forests and a choppy voyage to the Falklands as a deckhand on a cargo ship.

These are just some of the adventures a journalism student will be embarking on when he graduates from Cornwall College this month.

Jamie Maddison is planning the escapades as the start of his freelance career as journalist, photographer, filmmaker and explorer.

The 23-year-old, who is completing his Fast-track National Council for the Training of Journalists course at the college, said: "After university I began writing for the climbing magazine Climber and this gave me this unquenchable desire to explore lost and

forgotten corners of the world.

"The training I received at the college has turned out to be invaluable in my preparation for the trip.

"Having already completed an academic-centred journalism course at Cardiff University - followed by two years of freelance work for Climber - I thought I knew everything there was to know about reporting but I was completely wrong."

Jamie has already been on a number of expeditions, including mountaineering in Kyrgyzstan's remote Tian Shan Mountains and spending two weeks in isolation climbing in the South Africa's Cedeberg Mountains - where he took these stunning pictures.



Bloodhound to visit Northampton College

The 1,000mph Bloodhound Supersonic Car - the centrepiece for a global education initiative - will be heading to Northampton College.

It is part of an innovative new programme led by Northamptonshire County Council to inspire budding mathematicians, scientists and engineers.

Bloodhound SSC is powered by a Rolls Royce Eurofighter jet engine and hybrid rocket and has a control system developed by Cosworth.

The car is designed to travel up to 1,050 mph - faster than a bullet - and will attempt to break the world land speed record on the Hakskeen Pan, South Africa in 2013.

A life-size replica of the Bloodhound car along with its V8 Cosworth F1 engine, which drives the rocket fuel pump, will be based in the college's brand new engineering studios at Booth Lane from February 21 to 23.

College students, school pupils, members of the public, businesses and special guests will have opportunity to see the car, find out about how it works and enjoy a virtual high-speed driving experience in interactive events and activities. Principal Len Closs said: "The entire event will undoubtedly prove highly inspirational and we look forward to welcoming people from across the county to come and see what it's all about."

Cirencester College hits 101 apprentices



Cirencester College is celebrating the placement of their 100th and 101st apprentices.

Tuesday Townsend and Harlan Stallard have signed up to an apprenticeship programme, in partnership with Jesse's

Bistro.

Both Tuesday and Harlan are taking an intermediate apprenticeship in Hospitality, with Tuesday in Hospitality Services (Front of House) and Harlan in Food and Production, working four days a week at the Bistro and attending the college one day a week.

Head of commercial and business development Richard Ashwood said: "The last 12 months has seen a remarkable growth in apprenticeships.

"Employers across the district are now showing increasing interest.

"We have seen our apprenticeship numbers rise by over 112 per cent and have been delighted that numbers topped 100 in a year."

Manager of Jesse's Bisto Andrew Parffrey said: "It's so important to be supporting young people to get a foot on the ladder, particularly in the current climate and we're fortunate enough to be in a position to do so."

Canterbury College beat the Monday blues



Students and staff at Canterbury College spread the happiness when they led a national campaign to beat Blue Monday.

Led by its very own Blue Man, the college hosted a series of events to combat the effects of what is termed the most depressing day of the year.

There was magic, music, free food, a special chill-out zone and more at the New Dover Road campus on Monday, January 16.

The popular event was run by the college's award-winning Students' Union, whose manager Tony Payne said: "The campaign is about changing the perception of a day seen as the most depressing date of the year."

FE Week Events...

Debating the future of 14

NAS to drive out poor quality and rogue providers

Nick Summers

@summersnicholas

The chief executive of the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) has warned "all will be lost" if the sector fails to tackle poor quality apprenticeships.

"In terms of quality, it's all very well to gain market share, and grow the programme, and grow it to record numbers, but if we're undermining the prestige and the view of whether this really is a quality pathway, then all will be lost," Simon Waugh, chief executive of the NAS said.

Mr Waugh, who is set to leave his post in March, said short duration apprenticeships were doing a "huge disservice" to the apprenticeship brand.

He said: "There are, as we've grown, issues emerging around some of the quality around that delivery.

"There has emerged in the last 12 months, some apprenticeships that have been counted and asked from a provider, the money for an apprenticeship that lasts 12 weeks.

"It cannot be an apprenticeship in 12 weeks for 16 to 18 year-olds."

He added: "It is doing a huge disservice to the brand."

Mr Waugh, speaking at 'The future of 14-19 vocational education in England' conference held by the Westminster Education Forum last week, said it was a "challenge" for the NAS to drive out rogue providers.

"When we find poor provision, a lot of it is, why isn't NAS doing something about it?"

"That to me is like someone being mugged in the street and saying why weren't the police there to stop it?"

Mr Waugh also said he agreed with the concerns of *FE Week* surrounding rebranded Train to Gain courses.

"We have a lot of work to do in terms of further developing frameworks, but actually I think that Nick Linford and *FE Week*, I know one of his big concerns are things that were

NVQs and Train to Gain being badged as apprenticeships, and we've got to stop that happening," he said.

Mr Waugh was joined by Peter Cobrin, national education director at notgoingtouni.co.uk, Bill Fearon, principal and chief executive at K College, Tony Ellender, training manager at Balfour Beatty Construction Northern and Ross Varnam, former apprentice and silver medallist at WorldSkills London 2011.

Mr Cobrin was keen to emphasise the lack of high quality information, advice and guidance about apprenticeships available to young people.

"We are not winning the war about how good apprenticeships are," Mr Cobrin said.

"There is no quality information, advice and guidance on apprenticeships, and Michael Gove has abandoned this territory totally."

He added: "I challenge the FE colleges who do have those industry connections and the awareness of the real world of work, to step up to the mark and start channelling quality information advice and guidance about apprenticeships over the heads of schools if necessary."

Mr Waugh seemed to agree in his opening speech, saying the first priority was to ensure the public was sufficiently aware of the apprenticeship pathway.

"If you look at the key stakeholders, starting off with young people - are they interested in it, do they know anything about it?" Mr Waugh said.

"Also educationalists, the schools and everyone else that will be advising and talking to young people and their parents about what the route may be."

He added: "You're very unlikely to buy a product from a company you've never heard of."

Mr Fearon said that despite the concerns surrounding short duration apprenticeships, it was up to colleges to "accentuate the positives" about vocational training.

"I don't believe that our current system is

dysfunctional," Mr Fearon said.

"I think there are issues and problems, and the devil is in the detail and we need to address those, but I think it's the responsibility of stakeholders to accentuate the positives about our system and to truly make the best of it."

Mr Waugh also called for greater credibility from colleges and training providers.

"Does it really deliver value for the employer on one side, because these are real jobs, not just a bit of training and a bit of work experience.

"These are real jobs, with definitive, training and up-skilling through an apprenticeship,

and if therefore it doesn't really deliver for employers, real added value to their business, we will never create it as an alternative mainstream pathway."

The apprenticeship debate was followed by a panel on vocational qualifications generally, including Colin Booth, principal at Barnsley College, Kate Shoemith, head of policy and corporate affairs at City & Guilds, Janet Felkin, headteacher at Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College and Simon Perks, team leader of policy development at Ofqual.



"It cannot be an apprenticeship in 12 weeks for 16 to 18 year-olds"

Simon Waugh, chief executive of the National Apprenticeship Service



Ross Varnam, silver medallist at WorldSkills 2011



Robert Halfon, MP, chaired the session



-19 vocational education



Attendees were given plenty of time to contribute their own views and ask the speakers challenging questions

Pictures by Nick Linford



Left to right: Jim Wade, The JCB Academy, Richard Earp, National Grid, Lord Aberdare, Ian Pryce, Bedford College, Dr Susanne Wiborg, Institute of Education

Over 100 UTCs by next election, says Lord Baker

England could have more than 100 University Technical Colleges (UTC) up and running by the next general election, according to Lord Baker of Dorking.

"We're going to have a considerable number of UTCs over the course of the next few years," Lord Baker said.

"Possibly, by the next election, more than 100 will be approved...and most of them will be open by then."

Lord Baker, co-founder of the Baker Dearing Educational Trust, used the conference to propose a new educational system consisting of four college types, available to all students from the age of 14.

The proposed model included liberal arts colleges, focused on traditional academic subjects "rather similar to the grammar school curriculum", as well as the emerging UTC model.

"You would then have sports, performing arts and creative arts colleges," Lord Baker said.

"The fourth, I think, should be a career college."

Lord Baker said the UTC model was a rare chance for businesses and employers to try and influence the curriculum.

"Industry has never had that chance before," he said.

"I'm fed up with industrialists always complaining how awful the English educational system is - well now they have a chance to actually shape it in a way which

they want it to be shaped."

He added: "That is revolutionary."

The UTC concept challenges the age at which students leave school and the point at which they begin to receive vocational training.

Ian Pryce, principal and chief executive of Bedford College, said: "Most schools have shown themselves to be useless, and I mean that, useless, at vocational education.

"I'm fed up with industrialists always complaining how awful the English educational system is"

"They damage the brand."

Mr Pryce added: "It may even be a word that's tarnished as a result of that."

Delegates were given an insight into the operation and learner outcomes of the UTC model by Jim Wade, principal of The JCB Academy in Staffordshire.

Mr Wade said many students think of the UTC as a fresh start, having previously been "discontented" with their experience in education.

"Quite a high percentage of our youngsters



Lord Baker, Baker Dearing Educational Trust

have dyslexia as a specialist educational need, and are of average ability," Mr Wade said.

"A key factor about them though, is that they tend to be slightly discontented with their previous school experience."

He added: "They see the academy as a second chance to make their education a success."

Nineteen UTCs have been approved so far,

although a further 27 were submitted for the second round of applications last week.

"They are of a very high standard indeed, right across the country," Lord Baker said.

"There will certainly now be more than 24."

UTCs cater for students between the age of 14 and 19, relying on relationships between both universities and employers to support the curriculum.

Each UTC specialises in one or two technical fields, but also caters for a broad range of general subjects including English, mathematics, science, a modern language, humanities and sport.

"There should be a rounded education," Lord Baker said.

"Not just a specialist education, a much more rounded one for the student than they would get taking a course at an FE college."

Dr Susanne Wiborg, head of lifelong learning and comparative education at the institute of education, said UTCs were a chance for the government to try and fix some of the problems associated with vocational training.

"The coalition is trying to shake up the education landscape in England through the academy and free school programme, and now also the UTCs," Dr Wiborg said.

"The history of vocational and education training in England is long and troubled."

She added: "It is clear for the government that many aspects of it still need fixing."

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To apply for these roles please send your CV and a covering letter to recruit@lcbt.co.uk and to find out more go to www.feweek.co.uk/jobs

The closing date for applications is 10th February



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To apply please send a copy of your CV and a covering letter to HR Manager: kirsty.lowde@charnwood.co.uk

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Closing date for applications: March 31st 2012



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To find out more visit www.ccndeputy.co.uk or contact Mike Galloway on 07765 595758 or Trudy Searle on 07791 090141. Closing date: 24 February.

City College Norwich welcomes applicants from all sections of the community and is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people and vulnerable adults and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

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To be responsible for the strategic management of Human Resources and Health and Safety. This includes the development of all aspects of HR policy and procedure in line with best practice in the sector and current legislation. You will ensure the provision of a wide range of high quality services for managers, the executive team and governors.

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Director Salary - £46,719 to £61,533

Closing Date: Wednesday 15 February

Darlington College is committed to safeguarding children and successful candidates will be CRB checked.

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FE Week needs your stories for its National Apprenticeship Week supplement



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH **ncfe**
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FE Week will be publishing a special printed supplement, in partnership with NCFE, and we want your stories now.

If you know an apprentice with a huge success story, an under appreciated employer or a training provider delivering with a particularly innovative model, please contact us via news@feweek.co.uk, or by calling our news desk on 020 3582 6416.

Alternatively, notify us of any event you're holding by tweeting us (@FEWeek) using the official National Apprenticeship Week hashtag: #NAW2012.

FE WEEK & ME

Make sure you vote online in our FE Week & Me competition

We asked students to send in a 500-word article explaining what brought them to college, along with their hopes, fears and aspirations.

- Step 1: read the stories at www.surveymonkey.com/s/feweekandme
- Step 2: choose your favourite and then and cast your vote by 1st February.

The winner will be announced in FE Week on the 6th February.



FE Week Sudoku challenge

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

Difficulty: **EASY**
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

Solutions: Next week

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

Difficulty: **MEDIUM**

Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty: **EASY**

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

Difficulty: **MEDIUM**

FE Week mini-mascot

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



"Mostly this week I have been reading a bath time story"

You can also follow our FE Week mini-mascot on Twitter @daniellinford