

A brief update about policy & other developments for third sector training providers

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Adult and FE Budgets

Transition to devolved AEB

As many of the functions of adult learning are transferred to combined authorities from 2019, the DfE has published its Memorandum of Understanding for the transition period with six of these: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough; Greater Manchester; Liverpool City Region; Tees Valley; West Midlands; and West of England. This includes a set of principles, what the combined authorities and DfE must do and how the MoU will be managed to support a smooth transition

Read this! The MoU is at <https://tinyurl.com/y7o5zzle>

Read this! Want to read a really handy summary of the AEB changes coming up? Check out the AoC website at <https://tinyurl.com/y7hjnk8>

Further funding cuts to come?

The FE sector could be hit with further funding cuts after the chancellor asked several departments, including FE, to find reductions of up to 5% ahead of next year's spending review. Although school budgets are

protected, FE funding can still be targeted even though there have been massive cuts in previous years. This is despite Skills Minister Anne Milton telling the Education Select Committee that FE had historically “*fallen against other sectors*” and that she was constant fighting the Treasury for more funding.

IFS report on cuts in adult and FE funding

A report by the Institute of Fiscal Studies on education funding illustrates the squeeze on funding in adult and FE learning. The report details a lack of investment in all forms of post-16 learning outside universities (which appear to have swallowed up the available funds due to vast increases in the numbers attending HE). Whereas universities now attract almost 50% of 18-30 year olds, adult learner numbers have almost halved between 2004 (4 million) and 2016 (2.2 million). Although 75% of adults are studying at GCSE level or below, this area has seen the brunt of the cuts leading to a fall in adult learners of 29%, and there has been a 45% drop in spending on adult learning overall, along with a corresponding drop in opportunities for adults to learn.

Apprenticeships have grown significantly though, now forming over a third of adult education funding (it was 13% in 2010). Interestingly, the £500 million extra annual funding promised by the government for T levels will be almost exactly offset by cuts to FE.

The AoC has highlighted both the social cost of these cuts (such as physical and mental health, community integration and self-esteem) and the economic cost, particularly with Brexit creating a greater reliance on home-grown skills. It also points out that the number of young people entering the job market are now insufficient to cater for this need. The AoC shows some startling figures on the plummeting level of enrolments, including health and social care courses which have dropped from 692,000 in 2006 to 219,000 ten years later.

There is little to report on the Chancellor’s solution to the problem, the National Retraining Scheme, and it would need to include significant new investment even to reverse the cuts, let alone help invest in skills. This will also be yet another of the 27 major reforms to further education that have been introduced in the last ten years

Read this! The Institute for Fiscal Studies report is at <https://tinyurl.com/ychxov2l>

Watch this! Sue Pember (HOLEX), David Hughes (AoC), Cairren Mitchell (Croydon College) and Tess (a learner) appeared on the Victoria Derbyshire show talking about the cuts in adult learning and FE – it’s at minutes 35 to 43 on BBC iPlayer at <https://tinyurl.com/y9vjzsp9>

Other adult education news

Falling adult participation in learning

Data from the Learning and Work Institute’s latest survey of adult participation in learning reveals that in 2017 37% of adults were engaged in some form of learning or had been in the previous three years. This is the lowest rate since the survey began in 1996.

L&W also undertook an in-depth study of barriers to participation with 37 adults to better understand the barriers, motivations and facilitators for learning. These interviews showed that adults see learning as a route to a range of positive outcomes, but that in a busy life, learning has to be viewed as sufficiently valuable for them to consider participating. The study found that learning is often triggered by big changes (such as a bereavement or divorce) but also by smaller circumstantial shifts, such as a child starting school. Triggers (i.e.

the tipping point when learning becomes sufficiently accessible and worth it) for learning are multi-faceted because barriers to learning are themselves complex and varied.

The report authors therefore make some propositions for policy makers and education providers, including:

- Create a national culture where learning throughout life is normalised so adults cannot help but ‘trip over’ examples of learning and opportunities to learn
- Circumstances are a key barrier to learning, so triggering learning is partly about making learning options varied, flexible, affordable, and inclusive of adults in all their diversity.
- Increase the availability of trained information, advice and guidance professionals to support and signpost learners to a range of wider provision such as mental health support and financial support

Read this! The Adult Participation survey is at <https://tinyurl.com/y84m2tax> , and the Barriers report is at <https://tinyurl.com/y94fws7c>

Social Mobility

Education Secretary Damien Hinds spoke to the Resolution Foundation about social mobility and launched a £30m capital fund and £20m to train early years professionals and look at the role of parents. The fund is mainly concentrating on early years, schools and the home learning environment.

He drew parallels between reducing gaps in early years development and improving achievement at GCSE, especially English and maths. He also talked about the meaning of social mobility, concluding that it is three different things: helping people from the most difficult, troubled backgrounds to break out of their constraining circumstances; nurturing outstanding talent; and helping everyone to fulfil their potential and move up to be able to get a better education or better job than their parents.

He spoke about the government’s commitment to making technical education a first-class option through T Levels and high-quality apprenticeships, including degree-level apprenticeships. But Stephen Evans from Learning and Work Institute responded to the speech by calling for a greater focus on adult literacy and numeracy, in particular parents, if children are to have a better start at home as well as school. He said, *“We are going backwards from a low base, while other countries are going forwards from a higher base. This has massive implications for adults’ life chances, as well as economic prosperity. And it will be a key barrier to achieving Mr Hinds’ ambitions”*.

Mr Evans called for expanded basic skills provision, more embedded literacy and numeracy in other forms of provision, and ways of boosting ESOL. He also wants to find new ways to engage adults in literacy and numeracy and new flexible ways of learning that fit around people’s work and family life. He emphasised the importance of family learning, where parents and children can learn together.

Migration Advisory Committee report

A report from the Migration Advisory Committee has surprisingly found that the effects of European migration are quite small compared to other factors (either positive or negative) and has recommended both reducing the level of low-skilled migration (except in agriculture) and creating a level playing field for EU and non-EU migrants. This would have a big impact on both employers and learning providers and increase the needed for more home-grown skills, as it would involve fees, visas and minimum salary thresholds.

The intention of the report is to provide an evidence base for the design of a new migration system for the UK from 2021 and is expected to be discussed at the Conservative party conference in early October. The headline message is to scrap free movement from the EU after Brexit and shift to a system which favours higher skilled workers.

The report has created a backlash from several sectors which are reliant on lower-paid (meaning under £30,000pa) EU workers, including the construction industry.

Read this! The Migration Committee report is at <https://tinyurl.com/y9ummeuc>

Functional Skills

New content

Ofqual and DfE carried out consultations on the reform of Functional Skills English and maths and the subject content for English and maths Functional Skills Qualifications has now been agreed. This will affect qualifications delivered from September 2019 (with an overlap of legacy qualifications up to 12 months).

There are changes to the content of both Functional Skills English and maths at all levels, including such things as non-dictionary spelling tests and a non-calculator sections for maths. British Sign Language will be allowed for the speaking and listening assessment.

Read this!

The new English content is at <https://tinyurl.com/ya9985nn>.

The new maths content is at <https://tinyurl.com/yc3nhmjb>.

Ofqual rules and guidance is at <https://tinyurl.com/y7ubjpps>.

New funding available to develop Functional Skills

To help organisations prepare for the new English and Maths Functional Skills qualifications in September 2019, the Education and Training Foundation are providing £8,000 to 15 partnerships of post-16 providers to create projects that improve the quality of Functional Skills delivery.

They want a clear focus on Functional Skills delivery that is innovative, evidence-based, sustainable and transferable. Projects must have at least two partners, and each partnership will receive £6,000 in funding and £2,000 in-kind support, which includes an assigned project mentor.

The deadline for applications is 31 October. There are some information workshops available:

- Free information webinar at 3-5pm, on 5 October – register for one of the limited spaces at https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Q3Smi8r5TPmk_hNB4KxWw
- Free research partner webinar at 1-2pm on 10 October to explore *Do's and Don'ts of Evidence Based Practice* - register for one of the limited spaces at https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ywcbSCnORmKjtuDvhq955A

Apply for this funding! Apply using the application gateway at <https://tinyurl.com/y9cvvdxb>

Other useful information:

- [Application Guidance](#)
- [Application Form](#)
- [Partnership Template](#)
- [Standard Terms of the Grant](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [ETF Professional Standards](#)

Improving participation in English and maths

The DfE has produced a summary report of 23 behavioural science interventions which aim to improve participation and completion of maths and English courses. The report looks at intervention projects based in further education colleges, workplaces and the community.

There is also an overview of research that has been conducted in the areas of adult literacy, numeracy and behavioural sciences, and an examination of the reasons why employers and their employees do not invest in basic skills training.

The research is accompanied by a practical guide to implementing the insights.

Read this! The practitioner guide is at <https://tinyurl.com/ybnh7tso>

Read this! The 149-page research report (albeit with lot of tables and pictures) is at <https://tinyurl.com/ya7nmsgy>

T-Levels

Legal challenge to T Levels dropped

The Federation of Awarding Bodies has dropped its legal challenge against the government's T-level implementation plans after the DfE offered to "re-set the relationship" with awarding bodies and watered down a number of commercial rules in the procurement process. These include allowing awarding organisations to co-brand marketing materials and allowing development fees to be paid in installments rather than one lump sum. This now clears the way for the planned rollout of 2020 for the new technical qualifications.

The FAB says there are still a "number of specific concerns" and it will continue to talk with the DfE.

T-Level tender launched

September saw the launch of the controversial T-levels tender process allowing Awarding Organisations to bid for an "exclusive license" to develop and deliver the new qualifications - a contract worth £17.5 million. Three separate tenders have been launched – one for each of the first pathways to be delivered from 2020, in digital (digital production, design and development); childcare and education; and construction (design, surveying and planning). The closing date for bids is October 26, and the contract start date is March 4 2019.

Read this! The contract notice is at <https://tinyurl.com/y8llnm75>

T-Levels explained

Nick Linford, Editor of FE Week, has produced some slides from his recent webinar on T-Levels. It's a good summary for anyone still a bit bemused.

Download this! The slides can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/y8kolka4>

Apprenticeships

Pearson's are producing an Apprenticeships Insight series of guides and webinars which explain everything you need to know - starting with the recent apprenticeship reforms.

The 'Apprenticeships 101 Guide' to the recent reforms is written in plain English and aimed at employers new to apprenticeships.

Download this! The *Apprenticeships 101 Really Simple Guide to Apprenticeship Reform* can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/ybdvqjhm>

ESF and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund

ESF funding guarantees

The Chancellor has announced that funding secured from EU programmes up until the end of 2020 will be guaranteed for the lifetime of the project by the UK government even in a no deal scenario. This represents an extension to the previous guarantee of funding secured until exit day. This is hoped to give the government a bit more time to design and develop a successor to ESF before funding disappears as well as give organisations some surety.

Shared Prosperity Fund

The government has published some more details about the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), its proposed replacement for the EU Structural Funds. Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government James Brokenshire made a statement confirming that the objective of the SPF will be *"to tackle inequalities between communities by raising productivity, especially in those parts of our country whose economies are furthest behind"*. It also gave reassurance that the fund will be simpler to administer than EU structural funds. The fund will 'engage' devolved administrations, and Local Industrial Strategies will provide the mechanism for mayoral combined authorities and LEPs to prioritise UKSPF spend.

There is a UKSPF consultation planned for later in 2018.

Read this! The Ministerial Statement is at <https://tinyurl.com/yas7af5w>

Call for Case Studies on ESF funding

The NCVO/ERSA European Social Fund working group is gathering evidence to inform their response to the government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund consultation. They are calling for case studies, data and research that highlights how ESF funding positively impacts the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged groups, the economic agenda (e.g. by reducing strain on Jobcentre Plus and other services) and the employability of those furthest from employment opportunities.

They are also interested in cases studies that demonstrate multi-agency and/or multi-sector partnerships, programmes that effectively foster innovation and the value of either long-term and short-term funding.

Get involved! Send your case studies, data or research to James.Loan-Clarke@ncvo.org.uk by 5pm on **17 October**.

Report on skills and productivity

NOCN and the Learning & Work Institute have produced a *Skills to Drive a Productive Society* report in response to UK productivity which has flatlined at around 30% below other comparable countries. It outlines an inclusive National Skills Strategy which will help productivity to grow, improve literacy and numeracy and help to achieve greater social mobility.

The report highlights particular gaps in retail, distribution, hospitality, ICT, financial services, insurance, construction, mining, utilities and manufacturing, and points to regional differences with low productivity in the East of England, East Midlands, North East, North West, South West, Yorkshire & Humber, and Wales.

The report outlines how skills and investment are the key to improving productivity and social mobility, and emphasises that while recent government reforms in Apprenticeships, T-Levels, devolution, the National Retraining Scheme, and Functional Skills are helpful, more is needed. Among the 23 recommendations are:

- More focus on management skills (including using local AEB initiatives)
- Prioritising local AEB funding towards productivity improvements as well as employability and generic skills (especially literacy, numeracy, digital and cognitive skills)
- A complete and integrated National Strategy for Skills Development
- Clear career pathways with lifelong learning skills to adapt and change
- Aiming the National Retraining Scheme at sector and local priorities, with focused short courses

Graham Hasting-Evans, Group Managing Director of NOCN said, *“In developing the way forward, we have to recognise the different needs of new entrants to the workforce and the upskilling imperative for the existing workforce.”*

Find out more! The report can be downloaded at <https://tinyurl.com/y9noqnx2>

Other news in brief

Essential Digital Skills Framework

The government has published its latest digital skills framework, designed to help those supporting adults to develop their digital skills. It has been updated to include some more specific skills statements for life and work to show progression, and some information about foundation skills. The framework sets out 5 categories of essential digital skills for life and work: communicating; handling information and content; transacting; problem solving; and being safe and legal online.

This is the first update of the basic digital skills framework since its original publication in 2015.

Read this! The Framework is at <https://tinyurl.com/y95abzac>

Adult decisions about learning

The DfE commissioned Learning and Work Institute and Kantar to undertake research to understand adults' experiences of, and decisions about, learning. The report presents the findings from in-depth interviews with 70 learners and focus groups with 16 adults not currently learning, and recommendations for the development of the Government's National Retraining Scheme and future lifelong learning policy.

Read this! The report is at <https://tinyurl.com/y7dvrzdu>

Get Online Week 2018

The annual Get Online Week will be taking place this year on 15-21 October. Run by *Good Things Foundation*, the national campaign sees thousands of community events held across the UK to inspire and encourage local people to get online.

Get involved! More information on the week is at <https://tinyurl.com/y7c5jfkt>

Wish-list for the Budget

AELP has made a written submission to HM Treasury in advance of Autumn Budget 2018 calling for a guaranteed budget for apprenticeship delivery to non-levy employers; some HE budget to support higher and degree apprenticeships; better funding for Functional Skills within Apprenticeships; the entire Adult Education Budget (AEB) to be commissioned; the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to prioritise education and skills provision; full funding for SMEs' apprenticeships for 16-24 year olds; less funding spent on subcontracting fees; and growth for Traineeships.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has set the Autumn budget date for Monday 29 October 2018

Read these!

The AELP budget submission is at <https://tinyurl.com/yd2g5gov>

The AoC budget submission is at <https://tinyurl.com/y9a3qrdj>

The HOLEX budget submission is at <https://tinyurl.com/y9b9nm3u>

Learner loans written off

More learners seem to be taking up Access courses after new figures from the DfE showed that more than £20 million worth of learner loans were written off in the 2017-18 academic year.

Access to Higher Education (HE) courses are usually one-year qualifications to prepare people without traditional qualifications for study at university. They are mainly delivered by colleges and are available in a range of subjects, such as nursing, social studies, law, and art and design.

Following concern about the low numbers of mature students studying in universities due to the cost, the government introduced the access course loan write-off policy in 2011. Once students have completed their access course and subsequent degree, the loan for the access course is written off. Last year, the write-off was £1.7m; this year it is £20.3 million.

AoC report on post-18 education

The Association of Colleges has published a set of proposals for a reformed post-18 education system including an enhanced higher technical route, a statutory entitlement for adult skills and some changes to funding and regulation.

Read this! The report can be read at <https://tinyurl.com/yapecrpq>

Perceptions of vocational learning

Ofqual have published survey results of employers, training providers and learners and how they see technical and vocational qualifications including functional skills, vocational qualifications and end-point assessments in

apprenticeships. It's mostly positive (e.g. 72% of employers value Functional Skills) although a lot depends on size of company and attitude to training in general.

Read this! The survey report is at <https://tinyurl.com/ybmbfkk8>

Tributes paid to Frank McMahon

Frank McMahon, one of the original founders of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) has died after a short illness. He was the vice chair and treasurer of AELP from its creation in 2002 until April 2018 and helped develop its membership to over 900 providers in that time. Mr McMahon was also the owner and managing director of YH Training Services, which has over 1,200 learners across Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mark Dawe, chief executive of AELP said, *"Last week we heard the very sad news about the death of Frank McMahon, who will be greatly missed by many, especially in the ITP world, given the incredible contribution to education and training he made through his life"*.

Focus on Funding, Resources & Events

ETF training - Digital Skills

ETF is still offering free online courses to help improve digital skills and tutor confidence in using technology in the classroom, workshop or virtual learning environment. The courses are aimed at those who may have experimented with digital tools for personal development or personal use and now want to further develop their skills and apply them in the classroom. Equally they can be used by those who are tech curious and might be new to one of the fields covered. The modules can be tackled in a linear order or can be dipped into.

Complete this training!

Get started on [Foundation Online Learning](#).

Develop your skills on ['Applying your Digital Skills in Teaching and Learning'](#)

The seven courses each run for three weeks and repeat every month throughout the next year. The relaunch follows improvements made from participant feedback (including easier enrolment).

ETF Professional Exchange Networks

Professional Exchange Networks are locally organised groups who meet regularly and work together to solve common issues in their teaching and training practice. ETF has been running PENs since 2016 and has established a community of practitioners from all parts of the FE and training sector.

There are groups focused on a range of issues including maths and English, Apprenticeships, digital technologies and SEND. Practitioners can take part in the networks free of charge.

Get involved! Find and contact your local PEN at <https://tinyurl.com/yavbf93s>

Become a supporter of Learning and Work Institute

Learning and Work Institute are launching a new network of supporters - people or organisations focused on and dedicated to learning, skills and employment who want to show their support and be involved in their mission. It's free to sign up and it will help you stay informed of their research and policy work, be involved in

research and campaigns, and keep engaged with events and resources. Both individuals and organisations can join Learning and Work Institute's network.

Sign up now! Find out more and sign up at <https://tinyurl.com/y9j43wnh>

Leading Change staff development programme for T Levels

JISC is working with Microsoft and three learning providers to produce a free online tool guide that lets students and staff reflect on their digital skills and pointing them towards courses to help them improve.

Microsoft said, *"Our easy-to-use online tool is designed to help you assess your digital literacy and capabilities and identify the necessary courses and resources to accelerate your learning, research capabilities or impact as a teacher. It will guide you through a three-level curriculum with plenty of free online resources."*

There are Gold, Silver and Bronze courses depending on existing level of skills, along with interactive, targeted development pathways. The courses are online and free.

Find out more! There is more information on a rather hefty 71 slides powerpoint presentation at <https://tinyurl.com/y9xscjz>

If you find this Policy update useful, why not circulate it onto your colleagues? It is also published on the TSNLA website at <http://www.tsnla.org.uk/policy>

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