

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

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## ***Adult Education contracts terminated for Third Sector providers***

Independent Training Providers (ITPs), including Third Sector providers, have been abruptly told by the SFA that their current adult education contracts will end next July, rather than being automatically renewed as before. The alleged reason for this is new EU contracting regulations which came into force in February, which mean that in future such contracts must be tendered for in an “open and competitive procurement exercise”. Other forms of funding, such as used by FE Colleges, are not part of this process, as they are funded through a grant. However these Colleges will be able to tender for the ITPs’ existing work.

The government is currently seeing through their plans to devolve funding for the AEB to over 30 local commissioning authorities in 2018. This is designed to empower the local bodies to decide how and where the AEB is spent.

The TSNLA has written an open letter to Peter Lauener and Rob Halfon to protest this proposal, which impacts disproportionately on Third Sector providers and other ITPs. Chair of the TSNLA Don Hayes MBE said, “there is a real danger that re-procurement may see these small Third Sector contracts being re-allocated to colleges or private training providers, thus losing both diversity and specialism in the sector”. The Association of Employment and Learning Providers has also protested, saying that either all AEB funding (contract and grant) should be offered for tender, or none of it. Chief Executive Mark Dawe, said, “Without this, it would seem the process is incredibly biased against large independent providers.”

**Get Involved and Save Adult Learning for the Third Sector!** Please support the TSNLA by adapting our template letter and protesting these developments. Letters can be sent to your local MP, your Mayor (if you work in a devolved area) and your local LEP.

**Find out your local LEP contacts** at <https://www.lepnetwork.net/the-network-of-leps/>.

**Download the TSNLA template letter** at <http://www.tsnla.org.uk/>

## ***Local Area Reviews New Guidance***

Even though we are now in wave four of a process which started over a year ago and is due to complete next spring, guidance on the process to come has been lacking, until now. Area Review-related guidance has finally been published after an outcry earlier in October about delays. Much of the guidance is about how Colleges can apply for restructuring funds, but of interest to Third Sector providers might be the **Guidance for LEPs and Local Authorities** which includes information about:

- local area review steering groups
- successful completion of an area review
- carrying out the recommendations of the review

Sir David Collins (FE Commissioner, but not for much longer) has also published a letter to the FE College sector outlining progress and next steps. It is telling that this letter does not mention the Third Sector, or indeed adult learning at all, while insisting that “the needs of learners and employers remain at the forefront of everyone's thinking”. You know where your local MP is if you don't think the process will deliver this!

The AELP has also published its submission to the *Sub-Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy: Inquiry into Post-16 Education Area Reviews*. Although obviously it is written from the private training provider point of view, some of its recommendations are of interest, including:

- A plea not to distort a provider market that already has a range of high quality options available. It says, “Instead effort should be focussed on creating a favourable environment for good providers to flourish”.
- A concern that Area Reviews seek long-term solutions, but without all Local Authorities or LEPs having the tools, resourcing or experience to plan and implement them. This, combined with a lack of clear guidance on who will lead and drive the process, could have opportunity costs.

### **Download these!**

**All the Area Review documents** : <http://tinyurl.com/zlj3vjc> including some of the early documents explaining the Area review process

**Guidance for LEPs and Local Authorities:** <http://tinyurl.com/jjyehqr>

**FE Commission letter:** <http://tinyurl.com/gq5oyro>

**AELP submission:** <http://tinyurl.com/zjfkmc>

## ***Brexit - European Funding Guarantees and implications for FE***

**European Funding:** The Chancellor has extended the EU structural and investment fund project guarantee up to the point at which the UK departs the EU. This includes the European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund. Funding for projects will be honoured by the government, if they meet the following conditions:

- they are good value for money
- they are in line with domestic strategic priorities

This means that organisations can continue to apply for EU funding while the UK remains a member of the EU. Where the devolved administrations sign up to structural and investment fund projects under their current EU budget allocation prior to Brexit, the government will ensure they are funded to meet these commitments.

**Read more!** The announcement in full is at <http://tinyurl.com/h977fw4>

**Implications for FE:** At the Conservative Party Conference, Theresa May confirmed that the Brexit process will start next year, no later than March 2017. There will also be a Repeal Bill ending our formal ties with the EU and handing sovereign power back included in the Queen’s Speech a month or so later.

Richard Doughty, AoC Create Guest Writer, has written a blog outlining some of the threats and opportunities he sees as resulting from the Brexit vote. These include a greater emphasis on developing existing skills, and a need for more “home grown” workers in sectors such as hospitality following the possible departure of skilled immigrant workers.

**Read this!** The blog is published at <http://tinyurl.com/gvgajs3>

## ***Digital Skills to be offered free - but no new money to pay for it!***

Government has announced plans to make training in basic digital skills free for adults lacking relevant qualifications, making it a third “basic skill” alongside English and Maths. At present the SFA pays half the full funding for adult short courses in basic computing, with the learner typically also contributing.

The proposals, to be included in an amendment to the Digital Economy Bill, will mean publicly-funded basic digital skills training being offered free of charge to adults in England who need it. This is part of the Government’s ambition for the UK to be one of the most digitally-skilled nations in the world.

However, the announcement emphasised that courses will need to be funded from the existing Adult Education Budget, which is in the process of being re-contracted at the moment. The Government will be consulting on the details of this new offer in the coming months, presumably for a September 2017 start.

**Find out more!** The announcement can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/gomrhqn>

## ***Devolution and localism - a guide***

Devolution, localism, Area Reviews. All these are now elements of the skills landscape with funding following plans made by local commissioners. Making sure that the decisions of these commissioners make sense at local level will be a major challenge, and one in which the Third Sector needs to take an active role.

Employment Related Services Association (ERSA) has developed a guide for local commissioners, big and small, called *Better Commissioning for Local Skills and Employment*. This aims to support commissioners in making effective use of the devolution agenda and ensure that the best possible services are delivered for learners and jobseekers. The guide includes sections on planning; area assessment of need and existing services; goals and the definition of success; and using transparent and open dialogue in consultation, commissioning and communication.

While Third Sector providers are not the main target audience for this report, it is useful in bringing together a number of “good practice” suggestions that can be extracted and used in conversations and meetings at local level to help ensure that the Third Sector has a strong voice in decision-making when it’s needed – at the planning stage.

**Read this!** The full 12-page document is available at <http://tinyurl.com/jlnb8jm>

**Read this!** A copy of the report by SKOPE at Oxford University on *The Long-term Implications of Devolution and Localism for FE in England* can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/jx2kkxu>

**Watch out for this!** The TSNLA has been awarded funding from *Awards for All* to deliver workshops on Localism and Learning and Skills by the VCSE sector. The project will deliver four workshops (South West, London, Derby and Leeds) and produce a set of guidance materials focussing on how to ensure that voluntary and community sector (VCS) providers of learning and skills to the most disadvantaged continue to be considered and funded. Keep checking your email updates from TSNLA for more information!

## ***Government listens to sector concerns about Apprenticeship funding***

The Government has this month responded to protests across the learning and skills sector (including from the TSNLA – see our letter at <http://www.tsnla.org.uk/key-developments-tnsla>) by watering down some of its proposals which would have seen negative impacts for young people, those in deprived neighbourhoods and small training providers.

### **What has changed?**

<b>Original Proposals</b>	<b>Changes</b>
An additional £1000 for 16-18 year old apprentices to employers and training providers	The £1000 will be retained along with an additional transitional 20% uplift for providers training 16-18 year olds (and 19-24 year olds formerly in care or with an Education and Health Care plan) on a framework. <i>n.b. Frameworks only</i>
Removal of disadvantage uplift	A stepped system of support ranging from £600 for Apprentices in the top 10% of deprived areas, down to £300 (next 10%) and £200 (next 7%). This will be for one year only while a review takes place. <i>n.b. Frameworks only</i> According to the DfE, more than £60 million will be invested in supporting the training of apprentices from the poorest areas in the country, equalling around one third of all apprentices.
All training providers to join the Register	Sub-contracted providers delivering below £100k will not be compelled to join the Register. Slightly larger providers can opt to stay an 'approved' subcontractor through the 'supporting route' as long as their volume of delivery is under £500k. However, consortium leads such as provider networks that contract behalf of a range of small providers (often on a not-for-profit basis) but offer no direct delivery seem to be omitted from this.
Main providers to deliver over half of the training for each Apprentice	This proposal has been dropped. Main providers will need to directly deliver some training, but this need not be the majority. The employer can request that subcontractors deliver parts (or all) of frameworks or standards.

There is still no detail about the non-levy budget which has been the core of delivery in previous years and is crucial to the engagement of SMEs. However, the DfE maintains that the proposal to pay 90% of apprenticeship training costs will apply to more than 98% of employers in England that won't pay the levy. They will also launch a procurement for apprenticeship delivery for smaller employers who will not pay the levy.

### **Other points to note:**

- 100% of training costs will be paid for employers with fewer than 50 employees who take on apprentices aged 16 to 18 years old, or 19- to 24-year-olds who were in care/have an education and health care plan
- Employers will now have 24 months to spend funds in their digital account (an increase from the proposed 18, giving them more time to adapt to the changes)

- There is a commitment to allow employers to transfer digital funds to other employers in their supply chains, sector or to apprenticeship training agencies in 2018
- There is greater flexibility to train those with prior qualifications.
- Training providers will still only receive £471 for each Maths or English qualifications (Level 1 and 2)

Over the next few months, the DfE says it will promote the reforms and changes through online guidance, events and webinars. This Policy Bulletin will also keep you up to date.

Matt Garvey, Managing Director of the West Berkshire Training Consortium, adds in one further interesting thought: with thousands of RoATP applications from new and established providers, and thousands of procurement applications too for the non-levy contracts, how will the reduced resources of the SFA cope with accurately assessing and awarding the contracts in the timeframe?

**Read these (there's plenty of them if you're really keen!):**

**How it will work:** <http://tinyurl.com/jglfzyj>

**The new Apprenticeship Register:** <http://tinyurl.com/hyudrr8>

**Draft rules for training providers:** <http://tinyurl.com/hb6bg6o>

**General documents:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-changes>

**Free Apprenticeship workshop for the Third Sector!** The TSNLA is supporting a free interactive workshop facilitated by Sue Blake and Lorna Freakley, Senior Associates from the Strategic Development Network and funded by the Education & Training Foundation. It aims to: improve understanding of the new apprenticeship standards; help providers prepare for implementation of the Levy; and support providers to increase apprenticeship numbers.

**Where:** Voluntary Action Islington, 200a Pentonville Road, London N1 9JP

**When:** Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> December at 9.30 to 12.00

**Book:** contact [sue@strategicdevelopmentnetwork.co.uk](mailto:sue@strategicdevelopmentnetwork.co.uk) by 21<sup>st</sup> November

## ***ESOL Strategy***

TSNLA trustee and CEO of Open Doors International Language School Cassie Roberts attended the launch of NATECLA's ((the National Association for the Teaching of English and Community Languages) "Towards an ESOL strategy for England" in the Houses of Parliament on 12<sup>th</sup> October. This document sets out the case for a strategy and can be used by TSNLA members in both their own planning and in any conversations you are having with Combined Authorities or Local Enterprise Partnerships.

The document considers resources, ESOL for employment, using migrant skills, community integration, health and wellbeing, and supporting children. It contains the recommendations arising from a major consultation (some key considerations you can draw on when talking with planners and funders), some thoughts about how a strategy could be monitored and coordinated, and some ideas about collaboration and flexible provision.

**Read this!** Download the full report at <http://natecla.org.uk/content/631/ESOL-Strategy-for-England>

## ***The importance of employability skills***

The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey was released in July this year, surveying 500 organisations, collectively employing 3.2 million people, about skills education and the wider themes of

youth employability. No real surprises, but employers say the most important factors when recruiting continue to be:

- Attitude to work (89% - compared to 29% who say that academic results are in the top three considerations)
- Business and customer service skills
- Work experience
- Communication skills
- Self-management and resilience

**Read this!** The full report is at <http://tinyurl.com/j9tw4vv>

## ***Developments in Careers Services***

### **New website for the National Careers Service**

The National Careers Service is launching a redesigned website at the end of October. The new website is designed to work on mobiles, smart phones and tablets, as well as on desktops, and will continue to contain:

- job profiles
- find a course tool
- skills health check tool
- ways to contact a careers adviser

### **£4 million cash injection for careers and enterprise provision across England**

The Careers & Enterprise Company was set up last year to transform careers and enterprise provision in English schools and colleges. It will invest £4m to support young people most in need, £1m of which will be in “Opportunity Areas” of West Somerset, Norwich, Blackpool, Scarborough, Oldham and Derby, helping young people into work. Activities include work experience, workplace visits, careers talks and volunteering. It will also help coordinate increased engagement between businesses and schools and colleges through its network of 75 full-time Enterprise Advisers, working with organisations such as the CBI and FSB.

The Company announced the winners of the first round of funding in March 2016. Organisations will be able to apply for the second round of funding later this year.

## ***Focus on Events, Funding and Resources***

### **1. FREE EVENTS**

#### **Bite-sized lunchtime online CPD seminars for Apprenticeship providers**

The Education and Training Foundation has commissioned the Association of Employment and Learning providers (AELP) and their partners the CETT Academy, to develop a CPD programme exploring evidence-based strategies for re-engaging apprentices with learning and development.

**Find out more!** To find seminar dates, content details and bookings, click on <http://tinyurl.com/zt6de74>

#### **Free training for Third Sector providers of Apprenticeships**

The TSNLA is supporting free practical training workshops delivered by the Association of Employment & Learning Providers (AELP) and funded by the Education & Training Foundation for providers of Apprenticeships who may be liable to pay next year’s Apprenticeship Levy. The aim of the workshop is to

improve understanding of the new apprenticeship standards; help prepare for the Levy, understand the Digital Apprenticeship Service and increase apprenticeship numbers.

This **free** workshop will be held on **Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> December at 9.30 to 12.00** at Voluntary Action Islington, 200a Pentonville Road, London N1 9JP.

**Book your place!** Book your place with [sue@strategicdevelopmentnetwork.co.uk](mailto:sue@strategicdevelopmentnetwork.co.uk) (07727 453507) by 21<sup>st</sup> November

### **Free Regional events on using RARPA**

Natspec will be running 9 **FREE** regional events throughout November, funded by ETF, to explore non accredited learning and using RARPA as a tool for assuring quality. The workshops are suitable for managers and practitioners. It includes sessions on setting up and managing RARPA systems, and resources.

**Book your place!** Book your place at <http://tinyurl.com/zgqfwbk>

## **2. FREE MATERIALS**

### **Free English and Maths resources from Open University**

Free online badged Open Courses are available from the Open University with no start or end date, so they can be studied at any time. On completion learners can download a digital badge which can be displayed on individual profiles, CVs and social networking sites. Courses currently offered include:

- Succeed with maths – Part 1
- Succeed with maths – Part 2
- English: Skills for learning

**Find out more!** <http://tinyurl.com/guk9b5x>

### **Designing for Accessibility**

Home Office Digital have produced a useful set of simple posters and advice about dealing with users who: have low vision; are deaf or hard of hearing; have dyslexia; have motor disabilities; are on the autistic spectrum; and use screen readers.

**Read and download this!** <http://tinyurl.com/h6dqdu2>

## **3. FUNDING**

### **Grant funding for Volunteers aged over 50**

The Office for Civil Society and Nesta announced three new grant funds totalling £4 million to explore how charities and public services can boost volunteering for the over 50s. The three grant funds are funded by government through the Centre for Social Action and will be managed by Nesta.

**Find out more!** Read about the scheme at <http://tinyurl.com/gr5xf6m>

To apply, visit [www.nesta.org.uk](http://www.nesta.org.uk)

### **Greggs Foundation's Local Community Projects Fund**

The Greggs Foundation offers grants of up to £2,000 to community based not-for-profit organisations to deliver projects or provide equipment to people in need at the heart of their local communities. These include people who are: disabled, suffering chronic illness, living in poverty, voluntary carers, homeless, isolated older people, or living with other demonstrable significant needs.

Eligible projects should improve resilience within a community through new approaches, innovative ideas and sustainable approaches. Funds can support sessional activities/respite support, equipment for sessional activities, trips and residential breaks. The deadline for applications is 3 March 2017.

**Find out more!** More information at <http://tinyurl.com/hv6k9f9>

### **RESOURCE: explore grant data**

GrantNav is a free online service that allows you to search, explore and download UK grant data from funders publishing their data to the 360Giving Standard. By using GrantNav, you can find out which organisations have funded which sectors or regions, making it easier to map out the resources that are available and how this may have changed over time. It will also help organisations obtain an overview of other organisations working in the same areas.

**Find out more!** [Visit GrantNav here](#)

## ***Other news in brief***

### **Increases in minimum wage for Apprentices**

On Saturday, 1 October, the National Minimum Wage for apprentices, and workers under the age of 25, increased. The apprentice rate applies to apprentices under the age of 19, or those over 19 and in the first year of their apprenticeship. After their first year, apprentices must be paid at least the minimum wage rate appropriate to their age (including the National Living Wage if they are aged 25 or over).

**Find out more!** All [rates](#) are listed on GOV.UK.

### **New FE Commissioner**

Richard Atkins has been confirmed this week as the new Further Education Commissioner. The government has also appointed Steve Hutchinson, Cindy Rampersaud and Andrew Tyley as deputy FE commissioners, joining John Hogg and David Williams. Mr Atkins has stepped down from his role on the board of Ofsted to avoid any conflicts of interest. The FE commissioner not only heads the Area Review programme, but also leads the commissioner intervention process to drive improvement in colleges.

### **AoC Wishlist in advance of the Autumn Statement**

The Association of Colleges (AoC) published its 'wish list' for the Chancellor ahead of next month's Autumn statement listing 20 recommendations. Key calls of interest to the Third Sector include:

- HM Treasury should set a medium term target to increase spending on education and training to 5% of GDP and direct a share of the additional funding to post-16 education
- The management of education spending should be reformed to improve efficiency, to allocate funds to areas of greatest need and to provide more predictability.
- The Adult Education Budget should be sustained at least at £1.5 billion in the short term and should be used to guarantee a Citizen's Skills Entitlement. After 2019, the budget should be used to support a new English Social Fund (new ESF).
- DfE and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) should publish a Skills Devolution Green Paper to help clarify responsibilities and priorities and encourage debate about the potential benefits and risks.

**Read this!** Full details at <http://tinyurl.com/gmcz24h>

### **Employability vs education?**

Stephen Nexley [@stephenexley](#) writes about how the political focus on employability is meaning that the education side of FE risks being ignored. He says the loss of a Minister with “further education” or “lifelong learning” in their title is more than just semantics. It reflects the shift in political focus almost exclusively towards employability, a focus even more talked about since Brexit. This has become the sector mantra now, with even NIACE ditching “adult and continuing education” from its title when it rebranded as the Learning and Work Institute. But the unfortunate consequence is that the “education” part of FE appears to be being forgotten, and space for pedagogy seems to be diminishing.

On the plus side, the Education Endowment Foundation has moved into 16-plus education, and ResearchED is holding its first conference on FE and vocational education in December, supported by the *TES*.

**Read this!** Stephen Nexley’s article in full is at <http://tinyurl.com/jufuy9>

### **When is vocational not vocational?**

Skills Minister Robert Halfon MP spoke at the Edge Annual Lecture at Westminster Kingsway College held by the independent education charity, the Edge Foundation. He voiced his support for raising the status of technical and professional learning and emphasised that a high quality technical education will not only open doors to skilled employment, it will give individuals a vital step on the ladder of opportunity.

The event marked the launch of the new Edge Grant Fund which will award £1million of funding biennially to educational and not-for-profit organisations’ projects which support the charity’s aims.

**Read this!** Details of the Grant Fund at <http://tinyurl.com/zj2hxpa>

However, despite this support, FE Week tweeted that Halfon dislikes the term “vocational” and has told his dept not to use it, preferring to describe apprenticeships as a professional technical education”

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

**If there are other areas of policy connected with skills and learning of adults and young people you’d like to know more about, please let Amanda (TSNLA Policy Advisor) know at [pavonlopez@msn.com](mailto:pavonlopez@msn.com).**