

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

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## ***Breaking News - Autumn statement***

Philip Hammond’s Autumn statement contains some items of interest for adult learning. There will be more detail in a special TSNLA Policy Update in early December, but here are the highlights so far:

- The adult education budget and the Work and Health Programme will be devolved to London and Greater Manchester from 2019-20
- National Minimum wage for Apprenticeships to rise to £3.50
- The forthcoming Industrial Strategy will include plans to build on the country’s skills base
- No assurances on Apprenticeships that a minimum fixed budget will be allocated to non-levy payers
- There is a second reduction in the expected Apprenticeship levy yield of up to £200m by 2019-2020

## ***WEA Impact Report launched***

A new report from the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) called “***Improving Lives and Communities through Learning***” highlights some great facts and figures about the transformative effect of adult education both for individuals and communities. Over 2,000 students from across the WEA participated in the study.

Key findings included:

### **Cultural integration and citizenship**

- 81% of learners met new people and half improved their understanding of other cultures.
- 39% of learners took part in activities to improve their local community as a result of their course
- 24% claimed the courses made them more likely to vote in next elections

### **Plugging the skills gap**

- Of the unemployed students 77% felt more confident about finding a job in the future
- Learners developed work skills including learning skills (76%), communication (68%), research (62%), critical thinking (60%) and creative skills (60%).

- The students that need most support benefit more e.g. those on means-tested benefits developed life skills at 18-34% higher than those not on benefits. Those on basic skills courses reported greater development of literacy and language skills, IT and numeracy.

#### **Health and wellbeing**

- 99% of students reported health & wellbeing benefits from their course e.g. making new friends (84%), increased self-confidence (77%), reduced stress (59%) and starting new hobbies/interests (66%).
- 47% were motivated to improve their health, and courses helped 46% to keep physically active.
- These figures increased specifically for BAMER (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee) students

In addition, the report highlights an intergenerational effect of adult learning, with many parents playing a more active role in their child's education after undertaking formal learning. Children's outcomes are also improved, showing that adult education can break the cycle of low educational attainment in families.

**Download this!** Download the report from <http://tinyurl.com/z4dvun4>

**Read this!** TSNLA Trustee and Deputy CEO of the WEA Joanna Cain has written a blog to accompany the report <http://tinyurl.com/gml7vfb>

## ***Local Area Reviews - get prepared!***

With the fifth wave of Area Reviews in progress now, interviews were held with a group of colleges at different stages of the process. Their advice while obviously targeted at FE Colleges, contains some useful pointers. Below are some key points (slightly amended to be more relevant to the third sector):

### **1. Play to your strengths**

Know your organisation inside and out as those that will emerge the strongest from the area review process are those that recognise the core strengths of their provision, as well as the areas that require development. Step back and critically review what you are good at, and how you can demonstrate it. Challenge your perceptions, and try to think about how your institution would be viewed by an external area review team.

### **2. Identify positive potential partnerships**

Take proactive steps to investigate the institutions you might consider working with in the future, rather than waiting for the area review team to make recommendations. Remember that while you may be aware of large FE Colleges in your area, they may not be aware of you, even if you offer similar or complementary provision. Why not consider initiating conversations about a joint further education offering?

### **3. Seek out your institution's champions**

Reach out to your organisation's stakeholders and engage staff, students and carers in discussions about your future, thereby gaining strong ambassadors for your institution. FE Colleges are encouraged to "Make connections with local charities and community organisations to ensure your college has champions who will boost your reputation beyond the college gates". This can also work in reverse.

Build strong relationships with local employers and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to enhance your reputation locally. Maybe you could ask a local business leader to become a Trustee, or second a member of staff to help your organisation get a better understanding of businesses.

### **4. Have the facts and figures at your fingertips**

Start gathering data so that you can be ready to answer any questions about what you do and your impact. Reliable and up-to-date information such as details of student recruitment, retention figures and success rates (both historical and current) are vital – and can also be used in your own marketing and promotion.

**Read this!** The full college interviews are at <http://tinyurl.com/hkuki5s>

**Watch this!** 3 ½ minute interview with FE Commissioner David Collins at the AoC Annual conference about Area Reviews and Collaboration <http://tinyurl.com/ju24kp3>

In other Area Review news, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) has challenged the government over the lack of workforce engagement. The ATL's submission to the Sub-Committee's inquiry into the Area Reviews expressed concern around the lack of clear policy objectives and way the process excludes both other post-16 providers and the workforce. It also explained how the secrecy around the reviews has led to considerable suspicion amongst college staff, a feeling of exclusion and a "culture of fear" of yet another round of job cuts.

## ***IPPR Report on Earning & Learning***

An IPPR report on boosting social mobility recommends better education-to-work transitions for young people who have low qualifications. It calls on the government to introduce a new, distinct pre-apprenticeship programme for 16–18-year-olds, as many current Level 2 courses do not help them progress to higher levels of vocational education or start a successful career. This then contributes to high levels of youth unemployment, as many young people struggle to make the transition from education to work. The IPPR says that current vocational education does not provide the right balance between 'earning and learning', especially Level 2 apprenticeships, which are too job specific, do not include much off-the-job training, are too short and, from next year, will not even be required to include a recognised qualification. This system falls well short of the recommendations of the Government's own Sainsbury review.

The report therefore recommends that Level 2 apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds are phased out and replaced with a distinct pre-apprenticeship programme designed to meet the specific needs of younger learners and help them to progress to further study or a full Level 3 Apprenticeship.

This pre-apprenticeship programme would differ from the current apprenticeship programme in key ways:

- Contain more 'off the job' training (50% - it is 20% currently)
- Include more general education (including English and maths)
- Result in a transferable qualification that explicitly helps progression to higher levels
- Subsidises employers who hire a young person on a pre-apprenticeship (e.g. using the levy)
- Only be offered by FE colleges, or training providers which are run on a not-for-profit basis, as there would be a higher general education content

### **Some key facts from the report**

- 16–24-year-olds remain nearly three times more likely to be unemployed than adults.
- There are around 270,000 16–18-year-olds on Level 2 courses, including 90,000 on apprenticeships.
- Young people with a Level 2 qualification have an employment rate of 70%, whereas those with Level 3 or above have an employment rate of almost 90%
- However, only 39% of students pursuing a Level 2 qualification at age 17 move onto a Level 3 course.
- There is a 'cycle' of low-level qualifications as 25% of 17 year olds doing a Level 2 qualification are still working at the same level a year later, and 8% have moved down a level.
- European countries with lower levels of youth unemployment than England often have vocational programmes that combine a 50/50 mix of on-the-job training and off-the-job training/general education. They also allow young people to progress into a higher-level course or apprenticeship.

**Read this!** The full report and a summary is at <http://tinyurl.com/hvxectk>

## ***IPPR Report causes spat between AoC and AELP***

Leaders of the two main organisations representing post-16 education providers, the Association of Colleges and the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, have clashed, with one accusing the other of putting "institutional self-interest before learners' interest".

Mark Dawe from the AELP challenged David Hughes (AoC) to “produce the evidence” when he claimed that independent providers offer apprentices “not very much” training, mostly assessing them “on the job”. Mr Hughes was defending colleges’ poor take up of apprenticeships after former skills minister Nick Boles suggested in 2015 that colleges were letting private providers “nick your lunch”.

David Hughes said, “If you’re an independent provider and you’re doing most of that work assessment on the job, there’s a lot of evidence that many apprentices get no-off-the job training.” Mr Dawe hit back, highlighting Ofsted reports that “79% of independent provider provision is good or outstanding, and the latest FE Choices and CBI data shows that by far the average highest satisfaction ratings among employers and learners are for independent providers”. He went on to suggest that Colleges “should focus on what they are good at rather than trying to turn everything into classroom education.”

The IPPR report suggested that Level 2 apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds should be phased out and replaced with a programme offered mainly by colleges. One of the report’s authors, Charlyne Pullen, is now head of workforce data at the Education and Training Foundation, which is jointly owned by both the AELP and the AoC. When the AoC supported the proposal, the AELP boss accused Mr Hughes of putting “institutional self-interest before learners’ interest”, adding, “Anyone who believes an ounce of what has been recommended in the IPPR report should put down their latte, leave their London based office, and come out and witness the challenge of motivating young people who have been spat out of the school system with no more than entry level skills.”

In response Mr Hughes defended the AoC, telling FE Week, “We have been calling for the introduction of a pre-apprenticeship offer for some time because many young people need support before they are ready to enter work. Colleges find that many young people need to improve their English and maths before employers will consider them”. Speaking of the college-only proposal for 16-18 year olds, he said “It is an interesting idea but not something we will be pushing for.”

Watch this space.....

## ***“Year of Mental Health” for college education***

A ‘Year of Mental Health’ was launched at the Association of Colleges Annual Conference by its President Ian Ashman. Concerned at the 85% increase in reported mental health problems among students, he called for a special focus on the issue in the coming year. With many NHS services facing cuts or frozen budgets, and national guidance often mentioning schools but ignoring college and adult education, Mr Ashman wants local areas to work together to tackle the problem through joint working, sharing good practice, placing health-funded staff in every college and addressing stigma. He particularly wants government to encourage organisations who support adults with mental health issues to engage with local colleges, and for colleges to review how they support their students. This may provide an opportunity for third sector providers to open up a dialogue with their local college on joint working. The AoC will be publicising some research soon on good practice around supporting students with mental health needs and working with mental health agencies to support learners.

**Watch this!** See the interview with Ian Ashman at <http://tinyurl.com/zhlnoze>

Writer and comedian Ruby Wax OBE has also called for teachers to have a better awareness of the signs of mental illness, saying, “Nowadays we know absolutely everything about technology, but we know nothing about our brains. With that in mind, we need to upgrade our brains as much as we do our iPhones.” She gave a talk at the AoC conference, prior to the launch of her new initiative run in cooperation with Marks & Spencer’s. The ‘Frazzled Café’ project, which is due to launch in the New Year, will allow people suffering from mental issues to meet anonymously with other people like themselves every two weeks. The cafes will be open to all ages.

**Find out more!** Sign up for more information at [www.rubywax.net](http://www.rubywax.net)

## ***City & Guilds report on the skills agenda***

Two years after City & Guilds published *Sense & Instability: three decades of skills and employment policy*, a follow-up review has revealed that barriers to effective skills and employment policymaking remain, jeopardising the success of recent policy decisions such as the levy, the Post-16 Skills Plan and Area Reviews.

Although the report welcomes fewer, bigger changes and a more consistent, long-term approach to skills policy, it warns that there is still a failure to get businesses to understand the value of vocational as opposed to academic skills. With the Technical & Further Education Bill (see below for details) proceeding through Parliament, the report urges the Government to work to get employers on board. While current efforts to improve the perception of vocational education and increase employer engagement in training have been positive, the report worries that progress will not be sustained.

The report further notes that recent Machinery of Government changes have meant that since the 1980s skills and FE have switched departments or been shared between departments 11 times, and that there have been 65 Secretaries of State responsible for skills and employment policy (compared with 19 for schools policy and 19 for higher education). This has raised fears that the current system is too disjointed to ensure a consolidated and coherent approach to policy.

Following this review, the City & Guilds Group is calling for the Government to:

- Develop a consolidated, consultative approach to FE and skills policy, including the establishment of an independent body responsible for evaluating the Government's policies
- Ensure continuous dialogue and consultation with sector experts and employers as integral to the design and implementation of the Post-16 Skills Plan.
- Ensure learning opportunities for youth and disadvantaged groups by making more apprenticeships available for the under-24s and unemployed adults.
- A focus on quality over quantity of apprenticeships, with more available at higher levels and in sectors with the largest skills gaps.
- Encourage greater cross-sectoral collaboration to enable employers and providers to adopt best practice from the most successful apprenticeships
- Provide greater transparency around the practicalities of the reformed apprenticeship system (particularly the levy), and commit to deadlines to provide further information.
- Minimise the burden of bureaucracy
- Consider broadening the levy to include funding for other forms of training.

**Chris Jones, Chief Executive of the City & Guilds Group**, said: "When it comes to implementation, it's a case of two steps forward and one step back. If the Government truly wants a skills system that boosts our country's competitiveness and productivity, it has to take its time rather than rushing straight for the finish line. That means working with employers and skills experts to shape implementation so that our skills system meets the needs of our economy now, and in the short and long-term future."

**Read this!** The full report and a summary are at <http://tinyurl.com/hwxsw2o>

## ***New report challenges Apprenticeship reforms***

A new report from the Policy Exchange (*The Skills we need and why we don't have them – How Apprenticeships should be reformed to make the UK compete on the global stage*) claims that a significant proportion of the apprenticeship standards are inadequate, and raises concerns about the government's focus on quantity over quality. It calls on the government to "move away from the three million target for

apprenticeship starts being the sole metric of success of the apprenticeships programme”, and instead set “a new system goal which focuses on quality”.

The report recommends a new definition of an apprenticeship course which would “both meet the identified skills needs in scope and content terms, and contain sufficient long-term on and off the job training, rather than being a generic training course”. This would help prevent the slip in quality where new apprenticeships are being created that don’t conform to quality standards, the duplication of content between different levels, and inadequate assessment methods (such as end-point assessment being done internally).

The report identifies six areas in which the new approved apprenticeship programmes could be improved:

- All newly standards should have to include evidence that they are focused on skilled occupations, and have a detailed training plan covering content, off the job training and qualifications
- Ofqual should inspect new assessment tools and accredit apprenticeship assessment organisations
- The Institute for Apprenticeships should be the voice of technical education for all post-16 learning
- Trailblazer groups should convert into Technical Education Councils, following Sainsbury’s pathways
- Funds from the apprenticeships levy should sit in a separate, dedicated fund, with the Institute choosing whether to distribute it on a sectoral basis
- State funding for technical education should include higher-level classroom-based qualifications

**Read this!** The full report is available at <http://tinyurl.com/gt2vomb>

**And this!** Read the Learning and Work Institute article <http://tinyurl.com/j573mdm>

**Are you still confused about Apprenticeship changes?** The The House of Commons Library published a helpful background pack for MPs who took part in a backbench debate on apprenticeship funding.

**Read this!** The pack can be read at <http://tinyurl.com/hhbj8sn>

And in further Apprenticeship news, the government has announced the creation of thousands of new Degree apprenticeships in a variety of careers. Universities and colleges across England have been awarded £4.5 million to develop 5,200 new degree apprenticeships starting in September 2017. These will offer an alternative to traditional degrees and combine university study with paid work. The 18 successful projects, including the University of Cumbria, Sheffield Hallam University, London South Bank University and Nottingham Trent University, have been awarded funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in the first round of a 2-year programme.

**Read this!** Find out more at <http://tinyurl.com/he56sje>

## ***Technical and Further Education bill***

This bill is designed to build on the recent expansion in apprenticeships and create a “gold standard” for vocational training, according to Justine Greening, Education Secretary. “If we are going to create a country that works for everyone, then we believe it is time we gave technical education the same focus that it deserves, alongside our schools and academic education reforms”, she says.

The Bill seeks to tackle weak courses, streamline the number of qualifications and strengthen engagement with businesses, placing technical training on a par with academic education. It will also rename the Institute for Apprenticeships as the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education and extend its role.

Justine Greening committed to “focus much more” on FE during a speech at an event in London to celebrate the Education Endowment Foundation’s fifth anniversary. She admitted that the government had for a long

time focused mainly on improving academic rather than vocational-based education, and promised to “bring that same lens and focus on to the more technical education routes, which let’s face it, most young people follow”. This approach was backed by influential education select committee chair Neil Carmichael, who recently rejected new grammar schools as a method of increasing social mobility when there were better providers for doing the job, such as general FE colleges, university technical colleges, and independent training providers. These providers were identified as neglected “Cinderella areas”, which he claimed the party agrees need more financial support.

However, although the Government is keen on implementing the Sainsbury proposals, the department insists that this will only happen “where that is possible within current budget constraints”. Lord Sainsbury has stressed that any new “high quality” system will need to be properly funded if it is to rival continental systems, particularly in Germany. He also pointed out the importance of having a national system of qualifications that is well understood and generally accepted, both by students and by employers. With the current system including over 22,000 qualifications, there is an on-going joke that “if you are not confused about post-16 education, then you don’t understand it”. He added that any talk of government being able to endow the academic and vocational system with parity of esteem without first ensuring its genuine currency with employers as “nonsense”.

The first reading of the bill took place on October 27. It will go through three more stages in the House of Commons, and then five stages in the House of Lords before it can gain Royal Assent.

**Download this!** The bill can be viewed at <http://tinyurl.com/j2aya3q>. You can also follow its progress through Parliament here.

## ***Focus on Funding and Resources***

### **Inspiring Impact – Tools for the Third Sector**

Have you ever wondered how to measure and demonstrate your impact, or use data more effectively? The **Inspiring Impact** website, aimed specifically at the third sector, could help you with this. Resources include a Code of Good Impact Practice, Principles and drivers of good impact practice, and two free to use online tools to help organisations improve their impact practice These are:

- **Measuring Up!** – this is an online self-assessment tool that helps organisations review and improve their impact practice, regardless of their previous level of experience. It gives a detailed picture of strengths and weaknesses, and an action plan can be downloaded to help guide improvement. The report also contains links through to the resources and tools in the *Inspiring Impact Hub*, so that those who want to improve their impact know where to start.
- **Inspiring Impact Hub** – this is a one-stop shop for impact resources and tools, pulling together a wide range of searchable resources and case studies relevant to improving impact practice.

**Find out more!** The Inspiring Impact hub is at <http://inspiringimpact.org/>

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

### **Private training providers outperform colleges in helping unemployed learners into work**

New DfE experimental outcome-based success measures for adult FE learners (2012-2014) which looks specifically at the outcomes for learners who were on unemployment benefits before starting their studies, show that private training providers are more successful (just!) than FE Colleges. In total, 48% of the 170,740 out-of-work learners at training providers found work – compared with 46% of the 276,490 unemployed learners who studied at colleges.

**Read this!** Read an article about this in FE News at <http://tinyurl.com/hnhgov7>

### **Private training providers ahead of FE Colleges in employer satisfaction too!**

General FE colleges have admitted to apprenticeship failings, after government research showed they are significantly less popular with employers than private training providers. Training providers scored 83.9% in the Skills Funding Agency's latest employer satisfaction survey, while colleges' rating was nearly 10 points lower at 74.9%. The survey of more than 60,000 employers measures the experience employers have had with their college or training provider in terms of the quality of training and responsiveness received.

**Read this!** An article about the survey is at <http://tinyurl.com/hb7lw5a>

### **Future funding challenges**

Funding guru Beej Kaczmarczyk from the Learning Curve Group attended the AoC conference and gave a 3 ½ minute interview on the funding challenges around 16-19 year olds, Apprenticeship funding and the future funding of adults.

**Watch this!** Watch the video at <http://tinyurl.com/zdjbzuzg>

### **Skills Minister visits Skills Show**

Robert Halfon, Minister of State for Apprenticeships and Skills, visited the Skills Show in Birmingham's NEC and gave a 1 ½ minute interview highlighting the importance of skills, especially for young people.

**Watch this!** Watch the video at <http://tinyurl.com/znyfffg>

### **Statistics about learners**

For fans of numbers, statistics and facts, the DfE and SfA have published lots of learner info about participation, outcomes and highest qualification held in further education and skills.

**Download this!** All the reports are at <http://tinyurl.com/jkxlz4l>

### **Qualitative report on supporting learners below Level 1**

A 50-page report from York Consulting on behalf of the DfE presents the findings from a qualitative research study to explore effective practice in supporting students studying at Level 1 or below in post-16 institutions. The research looked to identify both good practice in recruiting and teaching learners studying at level 1 or below, and the types of provision and support that best meet learners' needs

**Read this!** The full report is at <http://tinyurl.com/z2blkkb>

### **University and College Union Case studies on transformative power of learning**

UCU has published some case studies demonstrating the transformative power of adult education, as it calls on Theresa May to invest in FE to create the necessary opportunities for people and the economy post-Brexit. It says, "A million adult learners have been lost from the sector since 2009. Outside the EU, the UK will need to grow its own skilled workforce like never before. This will only be possible with a very deliberate and strategic investment in FE. Significant investment is needed now. We cannot turn on the tap in three years' time and expect to see the skilled workforce we need just flowing out".

UCU points out that investing in learning makes financial as well as practical sense, as for every £1 of public investment in FE, the government gets £20 back in economic returns. But it wants that investment needs to



be in more than just apprenticeships, and it is calling on the sector to work together and make the case for both significant investment, and for a workforce strategy that values and retains FE teachers.

**Read this!** Have a look at the case studies at <http://tinyurl.com/hg58sh2>

### **Prison Education reforms**

Offenders will be able to work towards an apprenticeship while in prison for the first time under new plans put forward by the government as part of the *Prison Safety and Reform White Paper*. Although prisoners are not able to study an apprenticeship while in prison, the new pathway would mean that education and training done in prison could count towards an apprenticeship after a prisoner's release.

The education proposals in the White Paper are based on the recommendations from a review into prison education carried out by Dame Sally Coates in May, which also included plans to hand over responsibility for education and training provision to prison governors, and to allow them to commission providers for their individual prisons once their existing OLASS contracts have come to an end.

**Read this!** Read the White Paper at <http://tinyurl.com/hp6fuzc>

**Read this!** Read Dame Sally Coates report "Unlocking Potential: A review of education in prison" at <http://tinyurl.com/hdnzjtg>

### **LEP Guidance**

The government updated its guidance to LEPs on how to operate within the National Assurance Framework particularly in terms of the local assurance, value for money and transparency needed for Growth Deals.

**Read this!** The LEP guidance in full is at <http://tinyurl.com/jnwflfu>

### **AELP worried about vital skills programmes stalling while government is preoccupied with reform**

The chief executive of the AELP, Mark Dawe, has challenged ministers to use the Chancellor's spending review to step up their investment in skills programmes essential to give a post-Brexit Britain the workforce it needs to remain competitive. The call comes after the Business Secretary revealed that the government's letter to the Nissan board included a pledge on funding skills training as part of the agreement to maintain the car company's investment in its Sunderland plant.

Mr Dawe talked about problems with demand not being met, a lack of growth funding available, a slow response to adults applying for loans, and a lack of investment in traineeships as a stepping stone to apprenticeships. The AELP has called for the proposed procurement of part of the adult education budget to be reconsidered so that all large providers of whatever type are required to re-tender, meaning that the government could gain better value from its £1bn investment. It also wants clarification on the direction of travel for the future of English devolution, including the new national initiative to improve adult digital skills which lies with devolved budgets.

### **Maintenance Loans for part-time students Consultation**

The DfE is consulting on income-contingent loans for undergraduate part-time study, focusing on loan terms, course and individual eligibility, and loan implementation.

If any of your learners want to study part time but need help to do so, you might want to respond to the consultation, especially as it does not mention funding for fees or maintenance. The consultation is open until 16 December 2016

**Respond to this!** The consultation can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/zgkjlds>

## **NFER Research on Apprenticeships**

NFER and the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) carried out a joint research project on how providers of Apprenticeships are preparing for the reforms. The report interviewed senior leaders in Apprenticeships' providers, and concluded that the current context of policy uncertainty and rapid change is putting considerable strain on the provider market. Concerns included:

- Delayed policy decisions mean time is running out for strategic decision-making and implementation
- Employer engagement is challenging due to the slow release of information
- Standards content – the lack of qualifications means a lack of skills portability and transferability
- End-Point Assessment system is still unclear especially how it will work, how much it will cost and how quality will be monitored.

**Read this!** The full report can be downloaded from <http://tinyurl.com/j8w9sfo>

**And this!** There is an article on end-point assessment from FE News at <http://tinyurl.com/gpd7o7b>

**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).**