

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

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Brexit

Political developments are happening so rapidly at the moment that almost as soon as opinions and comments are published, they go out of date. With this caveat in mind, here are some comments on the Brexit implications.

NCVO is of the opinion that although advocacy by voluntary sector organisations is currently affected by uncertainty surrounding parliamentary leadership and ministerial changes, this could actually provide some opportunities. With so many new faces, MPs might be more reliant on external briefings during this time. So the advice would be to make sure that you keep in touch with emerging ministerial posts, and provide/contribute to policy briefings as much as possible (see end of this briefing for new Ministers).

NCVO has produced a presentation on the implications of Brexit. Inevitably, it is already out of date, but provides a nice visual summary of the state of play at the end of June. They also ran a webinar on the same subject on 7th July which you can watch online (one hour)

Download this! Download a copy of the presentation at <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/1461-brexit-implications-briefing-from-ncvo>

Watch this! Watch the webinar online at <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/policy-and-research/europe?highlight=WyJicmV4aXQiXQ==>

EU funding: it seems most likely that current EU programme funding will remain available until the UK has completed its withdrawal from the EU, which means that most existing commitments should be honoured. Applications for funding that go past 2018 are more uncertain, and there may be European partners who prefer not to include the UK (anecdotally this is starting to happen already with HE academics).

ESRA has called for the DWP to prioritise the letting of ESF contracts in line with the Big Lottery Fund and SFA, and ensure that Brexit does not adversely affect delivery jobseekers.

The HE Minister Jo Johnson reassured the House of Commons about EU funding: *“As my Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister has made clear, while the UK remains a member of the EU, current EU funding and collaboration arrangements continue unchanged, including those that apply to students, researchers and businesses.”*

Employment Support: Kirsty McHugh (Employment Related Services Association) wrote in FE News (5 July) about the possible implications of Brexit on employment support. While feeling confident that ESF money is safe until at least 2018, she worries about after that, especially as the ring-fenced nature of ESF support will cease, and may be threatened amongst other competing demands.

She also highlights other items that are now on hold, including the Life Chances strategy and the long awaited green paper on disability and health (pushed back to later this year). She sees ERSA’s job as working with civil servants and local government officials to prevent delays in contracting (such as the Work and Health Programme), and making the case for wider social spending – whether on employment, skills, financial inclusion or community regeneration. She wants to work with local authorities, LEPS, charity bodies, housing associations and others to protect the vital spend on supporting the unemployed.

Read this! Kirsty’s article can be read in full at <https://www.fenews.co.uk/featured-article/kirsty-comment-piece-on-brexit-12246>

AELP Conference: At the end of June, Nick Boles (then FE Skills Minister – he resigned on 13th July) was upbeat, stating that outside of the EU it will be more important than ever for the UK to invest in skills. He recommitted the Conservative Party to Apprenticeships, but admitted the timing for the Apprenticeship Levy guidance will be delayed due to Brexit. The April 2017 start date, however, will not be delayed

Read this! Article about resignation of Nick Boles <https://www.tes.com/news/further-education/breaking-news/nick-boles-resigns-skills-minister>

The Big Lottery Funding: on 30th June DCLG provided a position statement about EU structural funds. It said it would carry on appraising and delivering projects as usual, but it is pausing in the issue of new funding agreements. While it is still developing the content of new project calls for July, it may change the timing of this, especially connected to the ERDF programme. The Building Better Opportunities programme will be honoured for all existing co-funded programmes until delivery is complete.

DWP element of the Work and Health Programme: According to the Institute of Employability Professionals, procurement should not be affected by Brexit in any other way other than the timeline. However, any planned allocation of additional ESF monies are more uncertain. ESRA however, has called for a new Financial Statement, given the aims of halving the disability employment gap was supposed to be funded through ESF

Find out more! Read the article at <http://www.myiep.uk/news/295482/ERSA-communication-regarding-EU-referendum-result.htm>

Theresa May, in her first Cabinet, gave some hope to those working in education and skills: *“We will not allow the country to be defined by Brexit but instead build the education, skills, and social mobility to allow everyone to prosper from the opportunities of leaving the EU.”*

Great Tweet on the political upheavals: *“Perhaps we could find an executive head who could lead both Parties at once? It’s a typical response to recruitment challenges in education”* - [@russellhobby](#)

Lord Sainsbury's Skills Plan

Amazing fact No 1: By 2020 the UK will rank 28 out of 33 OECD countries in terms of developing intermediate-level technical skills. This is despite a major shortage of technicians in the country.

Amazing fact No 2: There have been 28 major Parliamentary Acts relating to vocational and further education and skills training in the last 35 years. And here’s another one planned

Lord Sainsbury’s Skills Plan proposes replacing the current system of more than 20,000 technical courses with 15 high-quality routes, developed in conjunction with employers and the new Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education. The first routes will be made available from 2019 and will take place at a college (with work placement), or through apprenticeships. He hopes to encourage greater equality between academic and technical qualifications and bring qualifications closer to the job market.

However, a recent You Gov survey suggested only 7% of 18-24 year olds consider Apprenticeships as a way forward (whereas 68% think HE is a better option). Most growth in numbers of Apprenticeships over the past 10 years has been in people who were already employed.

What are the main proposed changes?

1. At 16, students will have to choose between an academic (A level) option or a new “technical option” – no mixtures allowed.
2. The “technical option” will have 15 technical routes: agriculture, environmental & animal care; business & admin; catering & hospitality; childcare & education; construction; creative & design; digital; engineering & manufacturing; hair & beauty; health & science; legal, finance & accounting; protective services; sales, marketing & procurement; social care; transport & logistics.
3. Each programme will include a “common core” of English, maths and digital skills, and will include a high-quality work placement
4. Pathways lead on to either Level 4 or 5 higher technical education programmes, Degree Apprenticeships or Higher Apprenticeships.
5. The new Institute for Apprenticeships will be responsible for all technical education Levels 2-5. It will also bring together expert groups to set the content and standards for each of the 15 routes.
6. Level 2 and 3 qualifications will be awarded by a single awarding body or consortium rather than the current competitive market. There will be one qualification for each occupation group.

So what else is coming up, according to the Post-16 Plan (Nick Boles’ response to Sainsbury Report)?

- New Functional Skills from Sept 2018
- New pathfinder routes from Sept 2019 (content developed from October 2017)
- An updated careers strategy (summer 2016)
- The government’s Digital Strategy (later this year)
- Completion of the college area review process (April 2017)
- Development of a set of transferable workplace skills (next year)

Shadow Skills Minister Gordon Marsden, however, has pointed out a few omissions in this plan, including:

- Few links with HE Paper might jeopardize progression routes
- Optimistic timetable, especially with Brexit, Area Reviews and funding cuts

- No consideration of the impact of devolution
- “Get out” clause by government about not implementing proposals if there are budget restraints

The AELP has also flagged up concerns, especially the apparent suggestion that 16 to 18 year olds should only have access to 15 apprenticeship frameworks which mirror the 15 TPE choices that will be available in colleges. They believe that this leaves 57% of jobs in the economy outside the recommendation’s scope.

Read this! Lord Sainsbury’s rationale for the new plan is at http://feweek.co.uk/2016/07/08/streamlining-technical-education-routes-for-highly-skilled-workforce/?utm_source=sumome&utm_medium=linkedin&utm_campaign=sumome_share

Read this! There’s a summary of the debate at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-36745058?platform=hootsuite>

Download this! The new Skills Plan <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-skills-plan-and-independent-report-on-technical-education>

SIR Data Opportunity

The TSNLA is working with the Education and Training Foundation to improve the quality of data about the workforce in the VCSE learning and skill sector in an attempt to secure continuing professional development funding for the sector.

The ETF has developed a new workforce analysis tool (**SIR Data Insights service**) to help you collect, analyse and benchmark key data about your workforce. The system replaces the annual workforce survey and will help organisations (including third sector) in their management and planning. It will also provide accurate and more timely evidence to policy makers.

Improvements include:

- Enter your own data directly to the system at contract level
- Access management dashboards showing analysis of pay, qualifications, age, gender and ethnicity
- Benchmark your organisation against other providers in the sector by type and size

Get involved! The 2015/16 data collection window is open from 1 July to 31 August Register or login now at: www.sirdatacollection.org.uk. Get help from support@sirdatacollection.org.uk

Devolution and localism

Greg Clark, (then Communities and Local Government Secretary) reaffirmed commitment to devolution on 5th July, saying that the question was no longer whether devolution occurred, but how far powers were devolved: *“When we’re transferring powers from the EU, I think it’s essential that Whitehall is not the principal recipient.”* Clark said that he is assembling a team of local government leaders to represent the needs of local government in the referendum negotiations. However, Sajid Javid is now in charge....

Read this! Read more on this at <http://www.publicsectorexecutive.com/Public-Sector-News/clark-committed-to-devolution-with-much-bigger-role-for-local-post-brexit>

Dr Ann Limb, Chair of the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) shares some tips on how Training Providers can get more involved with their local LEPS.

Watch this! See the 5 minute interview at <https://www.fenews.co.uk/fe-video/ann-limb-shares-some-tips-on-how-providers-can-engage-with-their-local-lep-12236>

Apprenticeships

FE News has a 2-minute interview with Sue Husband (Director of the National Apprenticeship Service) about Apprenticeships and the new provider register. It contains information about the Apprenticeship Levy and the register, particularly the benefits for sub-contractors to work direct with employers without having to work through a Prime Provider.

Watch this! Check out the video of the interview at <https://www.fenews.co.uk/fe-video/video-sue-husband-chats-about-the-levy-and-apprenticeship-register-12220>

Matt Garvey, Managing Director of the West Berkshire Training Consortium, talks about the future of good quality subcontracting and the benefits to the sector of the Prime and Sub-Contractor relationship.

Watch this! Watch the 3½ minute interview at <https://www.fenews.co.uk/fe-video/matt-garvey-chats-about-the-future-of-good-quality-subcontracting-12235>

Support with the implementation of the apprenticeship reforms: The Education and Training Foundation has commissioned AELP to run the next phase of the Future Apprenticeships Programme. This second phase focuses on further developing the skills of provider staff to deliver new apprenticeship standards, build new and develop existing relationships with employers, and understand the systems and processes necessary to deliver high quality apprenticeships.

The support will be charged for at a subsidised rate. However, there will be some information sharing webinars available free of charge covering funding; end point assessment (EPA) and how to apply to become an EPA organisation; the application process for the new Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers; the use of the Digital Apprenticeship Service; and how to attract high calibre apprentices.

The resources developed will be added to the toolkit that has already been created and is available on the Future Apprenticeships portal <http://futureapprenticeships.org.uk/resources/>

Find out More! <http://www.aelp.org.uk/news/pressReleases/details/further-support-for-fe-and-skills-sector-with-the/>

All Party Parliamentary Report on Adult Education

The Warwick Institute for Employment Research (IER) was commissioned by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Adult Education to undertake a study to scope the need, reach and areas for policy and practice development for adult education of disadvantaged adults. The report, ***Closing the Learning Gap – Opening up Opportunities for Adults***, gathered the views of key stakeholders, partners and providers on their top priorities for adult learning over the next 5-10 years, and was launched at an All Party Parliamentary Group for Adult Education Reception.

The report outlines the benefits of adult education, focusing on what works well and what needs to be improved to make best use of the resources available for adult education, particularly in addressing the needs of those most disadvantaged in our society. It focuses on adult learners who may be out of work, in work, transitioning between roles and those who are older learners.

Read this! Download the report at http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/research/adult_education

Focus on Funding and Resources

Life Chances Fund: The Cabinet Office Minister for Civil Society, Rob Wilson, launched an £80 million 'Life Chances Fund' on 4th July to help transform people's lives. The fund is to *"tackle entrenched social issues, improving people's life chances by looking at local solutions for local problems to bring better life chances to individuals"*. The fund will also support a new academic centre to understand and measure new approaches for the public sector to commission services.

The fund is structured around 6 key themes: drug & alcohol dependency; children's services; early years; young people; older people's services, and healthy lives. Applications for proposals focused on children's services and tackling drug and alcohol dependency are now open, to be followed by the other themes over the next 12 months.

Find out more! More info at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/life-chances-fund>

Interested in Functional Skills? Check out the *For Skills* website and sign up to free updates which give you loads of free resources and ideas around FS.

Find out more! <http://www.forskills.co.uk/>

Grants in London: London Community Foundation has a new webpage about grants available in the capital and surrounds. You can sign up for email updates, or search the webpage for details of all grants by borough

Find out more! at http://www.londoncf.org.uk/grants/available-grants/overview.aspx?dm_i=1QF7,4AIDH,MBJ4OK,FP62P,1

Other news in brief

The Annual Employers' Survey is published by CBI/Pearson (completed before the referendum) highlighting employer concerns about the apprenticeship levy, the growing demand for high level skills and continuing interest in young people's work attitudes and readiness.

Read this! Read a summary of *The Right Combination* survey at <http://news.cbi.org.uk/news/getting-skills-right-more-vital-than-ever-post-referendum/>

Dr Susan Pember, Director of Policy at HOLEX, presented at the AELP Conference, and was interviewed afterwards about what pressing issues adult education can help resolve. She says, *"Adult learners are not really catered for in the English system. Yes, we have some finding, but no policy and it relies on whether LA's want to do it, so this leads to patchy coverage"*. Sue's top four issues are:

- **Low productivity:** in particular the 20% of the workforce with poor literacy and numeracy skills, which results in too many mistakes and poor productivity.
- **Length of time in work:** especially the need to train for career changes if people are expected to work until their late 60s.
- **Integration in society and work:** looking in particular at English language speaking skills
- **How education and learning are the key to better health and wellbeing:** especially as the over 60s will soon be the country's largest socio-economic group, it is important not to lose their skills and experience. The UK needs to look at other countries and at continuous learning to improve wellbeing

Watch this! See the 3-minute video of the interview at <https://www.fenews.co.uk/fe-video/susan-pember-discusses-her-four-pressing-issues-in-adult-education-12232>

Functional Skills standards: ETF has published a draft of revised standards for literacy and numeracy as part of the Functional Skills Reform Programme. These standards will form the basis for adult qualifications involving skills in literacy and numeracy. Feedback was taken until 25th July, and a second draft will be available for comment from 1–12 August 2016.

Find out more! at <http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/research/maths-and-english-functional-skills-reform-programme/>

Ofsted and the Prevent Strategy: According to the Ofsted report *How well are further education and skills providers implementing the 'Prevent' duty?* too many learners are at risk of radicalisation and extremism. The report praises good progress, but highlights that a worrying number of providers, particularly independent learning providers, small providers and those working in isolation, are struggling to implement the duty. It fears many providers see it as a tick box process.

Read more! on <https://www.fenews.co.uk/featured-article/ofsted-further-education-and-skills-providers-prevent-duty-implementation-falling-short-in-protecting-learners-from-risk-of-extremism-sector-response-12285>

Learning and Work Institute propose a new system of Personal Learning Accounts:

On July 11th, the Learning and Work Institute published a policy paper proposing a new system of Personal Learning Accounts. Chief Executive David Hughes said the current funding system is not longer fit for purpose, and that everyone should have access to a Personal Learning Account by 2020 to replace grants, entitlements and loans. The LWI hopes this would encourage more focus on lifelong learning. Paul Warner from AELP said: *"Post Brexit, it has never been more important to set out clearly how the UK can operate a system of high quality, lifelong training for adults"*.

Download this! Read the Policy Paper at <http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/our-thinking/policy-solutions>

CEO changes at Learning and Work Institute and AoC:

Stephen Evans will take over in September as CEO at the Learning and Work Institute, following the departure of David Hughes who will become CEO at Association of Colleges. Stephen was Deputy CEO for two years, and previous to that worked at Working Links (employment and skills provider), the London Development Agency and as a Policy Advisor in HM Treasury.

Good practice resources from Education and Training Foundation

The ETF is showcasing research, resources, case studies and effective models of practice to improve Observations of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (OTLA).

They are also giving free access to CPD resources for staff, leaders and governors to increase their skills and confidence to get the most from learning technologies, and help improve skills and confidence in using learning technologies.

Check it out!

Research, models, case studies and resources about OTLAs are on <http://improving-teaching.excellencegateway.org.uk/>

CPD resources about learning technologies are on <http://lfuturesnews.co.uk/>

Selina Stewart gives advice on Prevent and signposts some free resources

Selina, the Education and Training Foundation lead on Prevent, tackles some misconceptions about Prevent and gives some links for free ETF resources

Read this! Article and links to resources on <https://www.fenews.co.uk/featured-article/providers-must-engage-fully-with-prevent-ofsted-warns-12304>

The new poor – The Institute for Fiscal Studies report highlights some new findings when considering poverty in the UK, in particular how the ‘new poor’ tend to live in households where at least one person is working but where income levels and opportunities remain weak.

Download this! The report and summary can be found at <http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/8371>

Ministerial & Machinery of Government updates

Here are some of the most relevant Ministerial changes that Theresa May has made so far (although now MPs are on recess until 5 September):

Philip Hammond - Chancellor (promoted - was foreign secretary)

David Davis - Brexit secretary (promoted - was backbencher)

Justine Greening - Education secretary and minister for women and equalities (promoted - was international development secretary). This now includes FE, apprentices and traineeships, wider skills policy and HE.

Sajid Javid - Communities & Local Government Secretary (moved sideways/demoted - was business secretary)

Greg Clark - Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (promoted - was Communities Secretary)

The new team at the Department for Work and Pensions is:

- Secretary of State – Rt Hon Damian Green MP
- Minister of State for Employment – Damian Hinds MP
- Minister of State for Disabled People, Work and Health – Penny Mordaunt MP
- Minister of State for Welfare Reform – Rt Hon Lord David Freud
- Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Pensions – Richard Harrington MP
- Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Welfare Delivery – Caroline Nokes MP

The new team at the Department for Education is:

- Justine Greening – Secretary of State for Education
- Minister of State for Schools – Nick Gibb
- Minister of State for Apprentices and Skills – Robert Halfon

- Minister of State for Universities and Science – Jo Johnson
- Minister of State for Children and Families – Edward Timpson
- Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education – Caroline Dineage
- Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools (in House of Lords) – Lord Nash

Machinery of Govt changes

Several government departments have been reorganized in addition to changes in the Cabinet and other political roles. The most important is the change in BIS and DfE. Skills is now part of the Dept of Education and separated from business. The DfE will now expand to include the FE, HE, skills and apprenticeships responsibilities. The SFA will be part of this too.

Response to this has been largely positive, with some caveats around worries that the skills and FE agenda might get squashed in between the big hitters of schools and universities. The Association of Employment and Learning Providers said: *“Having apprenticeships and traineeships under one roof could be a very positive move. We might see finally see the creation of an all-age careers service in England too.”*

The Skills and Education Group said: *“We welcome reports that the Department for Education will once again oversee responsibilities for further education, skills and higher education. We hope the combined department will ensure cohesion right from school age through to adult learning and will provide a more joined up approach, we hope with a single funding agency, and with more opportunities to provide young people with careers education about alternative opportunities including vocational qualifications and apprenticeships”.*