

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

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TSNLA and AELP join forces

The TSNLA's CEO Tim Ward has announced a new partnership with AELP to strengthen support for third sector learning providers. Details of the announcement are below.

Third Sector learning providers are an important part of the FE landscape, meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged, enabling them to improve their economic and social life chances through flexible and sympathetic skills and learning programmes. However, like many independent providers, they have faced increasing difficulties in delivering their mission with major changes occurring in the skills and learning world including devolution.

TSNLA was set up over ten years ago to champion the cause of third sector learning providers from large national charities through to small local community organisations and has enjoyed success in ensuring that the Third Sector voice has been heard. However, faced with the current challenges in FE, the TSNLA Board has concluded that the future interests of Third Sector providers will be best served by working more closely with Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP).

AELP and TSNLA have often made common cause, particularly with current Government policy which treats contracted providers separately from grant-aided providers. In addition, AELP already has a significant number of Third Sector Providers amongst its membership.

TSNLA will be able to contribute its expertise and reach into the Third Sector while AELP will be able to provide wider policy expertise, lobbying and organisational support. This will benefit members of both organisations as well as helping to ensure that policy makers and administrators nationally and locally fully appreciate the positive role that the Third Sector can make in FE.

For the time being, the partnership is focussed on support and services for the Third Sector and TSNLA will remain as an independent charity. However, TSNLA and AELP will keep the partnership under review to determine if a closer organisational relationship would be beneficial in the longer term.

Tim Ward TSNLA CEO says: *'This partnership provides an exciting opportunity to enhance the support for Third Sector providers and to strengthen the representation of the Third Sector in an increasingly complex and devolved FE Sector. AELP colleagues have been collaborative and supportive from the beginning of our discussions and we are very positive about the benefits this partnership will bring to Third Sector learning providers and the wider FE sector.'*

Mark Dawe AELP CEO says: *'AELP is delighted to be entering into a partnership with TSNLA. Third sector learning providers are a vital part of skills landscape and throughout the apprenticeship reform process, we have impressed upon ministers the need for local economies and communities to benefit the specialist and niche provision that many of these providers offer. As the adult education budget moves closer to being devolved, it is equally important that the devolved bodies don't exclude their expertise and experience from future provision. In our view, this partnership should help to preserve the value that third sector learning providers add and enable them to flourish.'*

Adult Education Budget

Free courses for the low paid

The DfE has announced a trial policy from September which will allow AEB providers to “fully fund learners” who earn less than £15,726.50 on specific co-funded courses (this rather specific figure is derived from a full-time job earning below the Social Mobility Commission's low-pay threshold of £8.07ph). This is designed to increase participation and “lift social mobility barriers to learning for those who would not otherwise engage due to course fees being unaffordable.”

The trial, funded from the £73m under-spend in the AEB last year, hopes to support learners to progress out of unemployment and into work, and will for the first time enable adults over the age of 19 who are not on benefits to access fee remission. Wage slips will be required to assess eligibility. The trial will be of particular value to ESOL learners in low-paid jobs.

Read this! See the new rules in full at <https://tinyurl.com/yakcuckb>

Top-slicing London's AEB budget to pay for admin

Following the devolution of the Adult Education Budget from next year, London providers are facing even more cuts as Mayor Sadiq Khan plans to top-slice £3 million to cover the costs of 50 new admin staff to manage the process. The money will be taken from frontline learning, and the decision has sparked a backlash among London providers, who criticise the plan to take further funds away from an already dwindling pot catering for adult learning.

The current budget for 2019/20 is £311 million, and providers claim that many of the planned jobs of the new unit will simply duplicate the work that the Education and Skills Funding Agency already does. The GLA, however, defends the move as it says the ESFA has refused to give a “service offer”, which includes procurement, audit, contract management, direct access to data and changes to the Individual Learner Record systems. It also claims the government has refused to provide administration funding for the AEB, despite the GLA “lobbying consistently” for more cash (although the DfE says it has provided funding to help devolved administrations prepare).

Providers are dismayed to see the new layer of bureaucracy taking money from learners, and fear that similar new top-slicing will appear in all devolved areas, making the new system more complicated and expensive to

deliver. The situation even got a mention at a recent education select committee meeting, where the chair Robert Halfon described the plan as a “waste of public money”. London’s GLA is one of eight mayoral combined authorities with deals to take control of AEB spending in their regions from 2019/20.

Read this! An article in FE Week gives more detail at <https://tinyurl.com/y9v8tju5>

T-Levels

T Level delays

Education Secretary Damian Hinds has refused a request by his permanent secretary to delay the start of T-levels until 2021. They have already been delayed until 2020 under ex-Skills Minister Anne Milton.

The Permanent Secretary, Jonathan Slater, has written to Damian Hinds expressing concern at the “challenging” timetable for introducing of T Levels while maintaining “regularity, propriety, value for money and feasibility”. He advised delaying the introduction until 2021 “in order to mitigate the feasibility and consequential value for money risks”.

However, Mr Hinds responded by stating his intention to go ahead with the introduction of the first three subjects (construction, digital and education & child care) in 52 providers in September 2020. Eventually there will be 25 subjects delivered across up to 1,000 providers, although this full rollout has now been delayed until 2023, following the recent consultation. His decision is based on the “central position” T Levels will have in reforming technical and vocational education, improving workforce skills and driving productivity growth.

T Levels are technical courses, which will be on a par with A Levels and will provide young people with a choice between technical and academic education post-16. A further 22 courses will be rolled out in stages from 2023, which will cover sectors such as finance & accounting, engineering & manufacturing, and creative & design. T Levels include a mandatory 45-60-day work placement.

Read this! Jonathan Slater’s letter is at <https://tinyurl.com/ycwybxya> and Damian Hind’s response is at <https://tinyurl.com/ybk4eclh>

DfE proposals for T Levels deemed “naïve and hazardous”

Not everyone is very confident in the contribution of the DfE to the development of T Levels. According to Heather Venis from Awarding First, the DfE have “prescribed the design, assessment methods, a substantial work placement of 45-60 days, an ‘employer reference’ and grading for a pass standard as part of the requirement. They have even designed the certificate! All without having a clue what the content looks like”.

Ms Venis adds that asking T Level panels to design meaningful content and assessment within these restraints will be difficult at best, and providers will find it hard to manage the range of elements and the complexity of the qualification. She also challenges the idea of a single awarding body for each route, as it opens the way for lack of quality assurance and problems of scale.

Read this! Heather Venis’ article is at <https://tinyurl.com/y7xvkrkq>

City & Guilds/AELP Research

Research published by City & Guilds and the AELP shows that only 17% of UK employers understand the new T Levels, with almost half saying their understanding is ‘poor’. Even more worrying, over half of education providers also say their understanding is either middling or poor. The research also highlights a number of concerns about the practical implementation of the work placement element of the qualifications.

Kirstie Donnelly, Managing Director of City & Guilds warns of "alarm bells" about the viability of delivering the work placement element as it is estimated that up to 180,000 placements a year will be needed - a vast increase on current levels. Ms Donnelly also points out that "the extended length of the work placement is an enormous step change from what is happening in industry today, with most employers only offering a week or two of work experience."

Learning providers and employers too have concerns about their ability to deliver substantial 45-60 day work placements, particularly in areas of the country without many opportunities in some areas of study. This could be problematic as students will not be able to achieve the qualification without the placement.

The research showed that many employers and training providers felt that financial support would be necessary, with 90% of employers wanting a financial incentive to help deliver the quantity of placements required. Currently two-thirds of employers take fewer than five work experience students per year. In addition, there were fundamental concerns from providers around the impact of funding learner travel and other placement expenses on the viability of offering provision at all.

Following the recent consultation, the DfE has now committed to putting in place a "comprehensive programme of support". This includes "significant funding" through the Capacity and Delivery Fund, and offering an advice and support service for employers, including a "simple referral and matchmaking service" to providers through the National Apprenticeship Service. It will also be "working closely with the sector to design and develop a programme of support to help providers and teachers" to prepare for delivery, which includes an investment of "up to £20 million to help make sure teachers are ready to deliver new T-levels".

The research highlighted a lot of questions about the relationship between T Levels and apprenticeships, progression routes and the potential negative impact of T Levels on apprenticeship provision. There was also concern expressed about danger of substantial work placements having a detrimental effect on the labour market for 16-18-year olds by restricting paid opportunities (including apprenticeships).

There was general agreement that work placements should be based around a common core of expected content, with a degree of flexibility allowed on top of this to account for sector, company and regional variations.

One other interesting aspect of the research showed the differing rationales for work placements between what the government intends and what employers use them for. T Levels intend work placements to facilitate skills development, whereas most employers use them as recruiting tools.

In another response to an 80% agreement in the recent consultation, the DfES has also indicated that it will fund maths and English for students who have not yet achieved level two. It said, "This means that students who already hold the minimum exit requirements will have fewer hours of study in total, but it will mean that we avoid disadvantaging students with lower prior attainment

Read this! The full research report is at <https://tinyurl.com/ycyaywfc>

Read this! The results of the recent consultation can be seen at <https://tinyurl.com/y77q5lv2>

Apprenticeships update

Disadvantage uplift on frameworks to stay

Extra payments of 20% for 16 to 18-year-old apprentices on frameworks, with additional cash for those in the 27% most disadvantaged areas were introduced in 2016 as a transitional measure, and the DfE has confirmed that this will stay for another year.

The DfE acknowledged that despite the rise in the delivery of higher rated apprenticeship standards, many providers still deliver frameworks. The promise to continue with the 20% uplift and the additional payments to providers training individuals from disadvantaged areas on frameworks is expected to mitigate the impact of proposed changes to the funding system which threatened to deprive payments for some young people in deprived areas of up to 50%.

Apprenticeship starts down again

Apprenticeship starts have continued to fall, down 40% in February this year compared to the same time last year according to latest government figures. This represents this biggest year-on-year percentage drop since last August.

According to the AELP's Mark Dawe, the problem lies with how the levy is being implemented. He says that "charging small employers for taking on young apprentices at levels two and three," is contributing to the slump in take-up. However, this is challenged by skills minister Anne Milton who says, "The number of people starting on the old-style apprenticeships has fallen, but the number of people starting on our new, higher-quality apprenticeships are increasing well beyond our expectations".

Education secretary Damian Hinds has been questioned by MPs on the fall in starts, and he also claims, "We are seeing a shift to longer, higher-quality apprenticeships, and that trend is to be welcomed."

Read this! The full statistics can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/yb69du6o>

Extra support for care leavers and others

Care leavers aged 16-24, who start an apprenticeship from this August will receive a one-off £1000 bursary to help the transition into the workplace for their practical studies. The move has been welcomed by the Children's Society, whose Chief Executive Matthew Reed says, "Care leavers have told us how they have struggled to make ends meet and pay the bills after taking up an apprenticeship on low rates of pay when they cannot rely on additional support from parents such as being able to continue living in the family home".

Stephen Evans, CEO of the Learning and Work Institute also welcomed the move, but said the support needed to be a wider form of Apprentice Premium with an access fund "to more decisively tackle inequalities in accessing apprenticeships".

The DfE is also updating its funding rules to provide greater clarity on eligibility and access to additional support, including drawing attention to the 'Supporting Apprentices' mental health service, operated by Remploy on behalf of the DWP, which provides a range of free advice and support.

Read this! Find out more about Remploy's Supporting Apprentices mental health service at <https://tinyurl.com/ycnmjyuo>

Other funding changes

The updated Apprenticeships Funding Policy for 2018/19 includes many of the above commitments, but here are a couple more:

- There will be a new 30 band structure for new starts from August 2018, with more increments between bands, to "provide greater clarity around the appropriate funding level for apprenticeships". Existing frameworks and standards will be moved into the new band structure at the same level, to ensure that there is no change in the funding available.
- The 18/19 policy includes information on the new capability for employers to transfer up to 10% of their funds to another employer to support an apprenticeship standard.

Read this! The updated funding changes are explained at <https://tinyurl.com/jucnrue>

Other news in brief

SEND consultation

The Education Committee has launched an inquiry into support for children and young people up to age 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Written evidence is requested about:

- Assessment of and support for children and young people with SEND
- The transition from statements of special educational needs and Learning Disability Assessments to Education, Health and Care Plans
- The level and distribution of funding for SEND provision
- The roles of and co-operation between education, health and social care sectors
- Provision for 19-25-year olds including support for independent living; transition to adult services; and access to education, apprenticeships and work

Responses are needed by **Thursday 14 June 2018**.

Respond to the consultation! The details of the consultation are at <https://tinyurl.com/ybpecmye>.

Mencap 'The Right Place Project'

Mencap is working with the DfE, employers and education providers across England to secure work placements for 500 young people with a learning disability by March 2019.

They are looking for education providers supporting students with SEND on study programmes, with the aim of provide them with access to agreed work placements with employers, and with support to manage them effectively through *The Right Place* project.

Find out more! More information about this project is at <https://tinyurl.com/y7uvjq3f>

Get your adult learners filmed for BBC Learning Online

Brighton based TV production company, Factory Films, who produced BBC Bitesize shows such as Physics, maths and Art & Design are looking for inspirational adult learners to take part in a new documentary series for BBC Learning online.

They are looking to tell 6 individual stories of people who left school with just their GCSEs or A Levels but have decided to go back to learning and get a qualification. They want people who have completed their studies and who have used those new qualifications to gain employment.

The purpose of these short films is to encourage and inspire viewers to embark on an adult learning journey of their own and to show that it's never too late to change careers.

Filming would consist of a sit-down interview and potentially some filming at their job, lasting around half a day. They have various filming dates during mid-June and are looking to speak with people as soon as possible for a chat over the phone.

Find out more! Contact Sian Bantock on: 01273 646456 or Sian.Bantock@factoryfilms.tv

Applications open for Maths Centres of Excellence

The DfE has launched the process for centres wishing to apply to become Centres of Excellence in providing maths for post-16 students with low prior achievement. The programme will provide grant funding to build teaching capacity and spread best practice on what works to improve basic maths for learners over the age of 16 with low prior attainment. This will be through trialling pedagogical approaches and sharing this expertise across the post-16 sector.

Applications must be in by 10 July 2018

Download this! The full prospectus for applications can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/y9mgo273>

ESF and Brexit

The EU and the UK government have agreed that the UK will continue to participate in the current phase of Interreg programmes (2014-2020) until their closure. This means that organisations can continue to apply for funding from the Interreg France (Channel) England programme in 2019 and 2020, rather than get applications approved by March 2019, as previously agreed. All applications approved and contracted before the end of 2020 will have their funding guaranteed in full for the lifetime of their projects.

Find out more! For any questions, contact the team on interregv@norfolk.gov.uk

Are you implementing the new GDPR regulations?

The EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is now in force on 25th May, affecting anyone who collects, uses and stores personal data, either electronically or in paper filing systems. Non-compliance comes with penalties of up to €20m or 4% of total global revenue of the preceding year, whichever is the greater.

So what do you need to do?

- Examine the information you hold and complete an information audit, documenting the personal staff and student data that's held on file, where it came from and who accesses it.
- Check your privacy guidelines and draw-up plans to accommodate any necessary changes.
- Check that current procedures cover all the rights of individuals, including how you would delete personal data or access and provide data electronically.
- Make sure you have procedures in place to detect, report and investigate a personal data breach, and assign a designated data protection officer or manager. Make sure you include E-safety

Find out more! Jisc has free advice at <https://tinyurl.com/yat9veqx> plus blog posts at <https://tinyurl.com/y6u32usk> and video clips at <https://tinyurl.com/yvcvm64x.7>

There is also a handy article about GDPR in further education at <https://www.fenews.co.uk/featured-article/17084-get-educated-on-gdpr-s-impact-on-further-education>

Post-16 Pathways

The DfE has produced a report examining the effect of different post-16 pathways taken by learners in England and how they had progressed by age 25. It shows the importance of achievement at GCSE and of reaching higher levels of education by age 23, and follows students through post-16 learning and into the labour market.

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

Consultation on Labour's National Education Service

The Labour Party's shadow education secretary Angela Rayner has announced an "NES roadshow", an England-wide consultation on its proposed National Education Service, which includes free adult education and the return of the Education Maintenance Allowance for 16 to 19 year-olds. The consultation is open until 24th June.

Find out more! Details of road shows and how to contribute online are at <https://tinyurl.com/yak5vemt>

Read this! The proposals are at <https://tinyurl.com/yb9hcyc5>

Festival of Learning

The Festival of Learning will take place during June where adult learning providers are encouraged to host free taster and 'have a go' events for people who may be considering learning something new.

Find out more! More about the Festival is at <https://tinyurl.com/hza9gs>

Quick Reads

After the sad announcement that Quick Reads would be closing in 2019 due to a lack of funding, the wonderful Jojo Moyes has stepped in to save it. The best-selling (and Quick Reads) author has promised to provide the £360,000 budget to keep the Quick Reads scheme going for another three years from 2020.

Find out more! Read the full story at <https://tinyurl.com/yc7y3a2w>
More information about 2018 Quick Reads is at <https://tinyurl.com/gsyfxbx>

Focus on Funding, Resources & Events

ESOL free resources

As part of the "Improving Language, Improving Lives project, The Bell Foundation has published an ESOL Tutor Resource Pack to support tutors working in the secure estate and in community rehabilitation/probation settings. The resources combine language learning with embedded wider capabilities in numeracy, digital, health, financial and civic (including elements of personal and social development), designed to make learning engaging and relevant to life in prison and in the community."

Download this! The free pack can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/yaqjckmm>

Digital skills in rural areas

Good Things Foundation has been working with three Online Centres to bring digital skills and confidence to small businesses, community organisations and individuals in some of the most rural areas of England. The resulting toolkit is for individuals or organisations looking to start a project in a rural area supporting businesses with digital skills.

Download this! The toolkit can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/ycq42ot2>

Guides to apprenticeships

For anyone still confused by apprenticeships or at a loss on how to advise young people, the National Apprenticeship Service has produced two fact sheets - one for parents and another for individuals - covering an overview of apprenticeships, the benefits and progression opportunities available, and information about why an apprenticeship is the right choice.

Download this! The parent's guide can be reached at <https://tinyurl.com/y963r8yd> and the user's guide is at <https://tinyurl.com/y7wx7hco>

Ofsted check list

Anyone anticipating a visit from Ofsted can now download an updated checklist to support providers, detailing what documents they will expect to see and what else will happen during the inspection.

Download this! The document is at <https://tinyurl.com/yb7fn5t9>

Digital Champions funding

Digital Unite is offering to train staff, residents or volunteers as Digital Champions through funded and part funded membership of the Digital Champions Network, funded through the National Lottery.

Find out more! Apply for the funding at <https://tinyurl.com/y7nknypx>

Watch this! Find out more about the Network with this 2-minute video <https://vimeo.com/252726823>

Essential Digital Framework now available

The new Essential Digital Skills Framework, created to help address the digital divide and enable people to fully participate in the digital world has been launched, in response to research showing 11.3m UK adults, including 10% of the workforce, are disadvantaged at home or at work by not having essential digital skills.

The Essential Digital Skills Framework is designed to help by creating a common structure and language. The first update since 2015, it reflects substantial changes to technology and introduces a distinction and progression between essential digital skills for life and for work. Areas covered include managing information, communicating, transacting, problem solving, and being safe and legal online.

The new framework is a result of a wide consultation, with input from over 300 responses from industry, charities, national and local government departments, academics and individuals. Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Anne Milton says the government is funding basic skills training from 2020: "Digital skills are now an important element of everyday life as we become increasingly linked with technology. It is predicted that 90% of jobs will need digital skills in 20 years, but one in five of us in the UK don't have basic digital skills"

Read this! Download and use the framework from <https://tinyurl.com/y9kdq3bh>

Video of debate about Skills Strategy

ForSkills have put the half hour debate from 8th May onto their You Tube channel, covering Robert Halfon (Chair of the Education Select Committee) and Skills Minister Anne Milton talking about skills in employment, social justice and skills shortages.

Watch this! The session can be seen at <https://tinyurl.com/yagec22b>

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>

For up to date information, please follow us on Twitter [@thetsnla](https://twitter.com/thetsnla)

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