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# AELP National Policy Update

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# Agenda

- FE Reform and White Paper: Skills for Jobs
- Apprenticeships 2021 and Beyond
- Ofqual/DfE Joint Consultation on General / VTQ Exams & Assessments
- National Skills Fund (NSF) / Lifetime Skills Guarantee and the L3 Adult Offer
- National Adult Education Budget (AEB) Procurement
- Key Reflections from Day with Ofsted Conference
- Q&A Session

# FE Reform and White Paper

- Gillian Keegan said the reforms will “**revolutionise post-16 education**” & Gavin Williamson said the White Paper is a “**blueprint for the future**” and specifically the White Paper:
  - Builds on the success government have already achieved in reforming apprenticeships.
  - Aims to strengthen links between employers & FE providers.
  - Will place **employers at the heart** of defining local skills needs & explore a new role for Chambers of Commerce and other business organisations.
  
- In summary the White Paper very much pulling all the most recent policy announcements together, rather than preparing the ground for significant wholesale reform – almost like a positioning statement. Specifically the likes of:
  - PM’s Lifetime Skills Guarantee:
    - Level 3 Adult offer and Digital/Technical Bootcamps.
  - Review of Level 3 Qualifications.
  - Level 2 and below call for evidence.
  - Further capital investment for Institute of Technology (IoT).
  - Reform of Higher and Technical Education (HTE) including able to access a single finance system from Level 4 through to Level 6 from 2025.

# FE Reform and White Paper

- The White Paper is split into 5 pillars/themes:
  - 1- Putting employers at the heart of the system so that education and training leads to jobs that can improve productivity and fill skills gaps.
  - 2- Investing in higher-level technical qualifications that provide a valuable alternative to a university degree.
  - 3- Making sure people can access training and learning flexibly throughout their lives and are well-informed about what is on offer through great careers support.
  - 4- Reforming funding and accountability for providers to simplify how funds are allocated, give providers more autonomy, and ensure an effective accountability regime which delivers value for money.
  - 5- Supporting excellent teaching in further education.

## Putting employers at the heart of the system so that education and training leads to jobs that can improve productivity and fill skills gaps.

- Chambers of Commerce represents employers and works closely with further education providers to co-design and co-deliver curricula - piloting **Local Skills Improvement Plans** in Trailblazer local areas, exploring an approach where they are led by accredited **Chambers of Commerce** and other business representative organisations in collaboration with local providers; and engage employer and provider groups to ensure government create the most effective models of employer representation before wider rollout. Big question mark though on devolution, role of MCAs and LEPs.
- Aligning the substantial majority of post-16 technical and higher technical education and training to **employer-led standards** set by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, so skills provision meets skills need.
- Apprenticeships will focus on three key areas. Firstly, government will support more people to **start apprenticeships**, helping employers to recover from the coronavirus pandemic with the skilled employees they need to grow. Secondly, government will continue to respond to feedback from employers to improve the programme, including by **making more use of apprenticeship funding**, making it easier for levy-paying employers to transfer funds and making apprenticeships work in more sectors. Finally, government will **raise quality**, ensuring that every apprentice has the best experience and reaches their potential.
- Improving the quality of **traineeships**, to better support young people to **transition** to apprenticeships and other occupations.
- Continue to support participation in **English, maths, and digital training** to meet employers' needs and support people to progress in employment or further study.

## Investing in higher-level technical qualifications that provide a valuable alternative to a university degree

- Use the new £2.5 billion **National Skills Fund** to enhance the funding to support adults to upskill and reskill. This will include an offer, backed by £95 million in 2021-22, for all adults to achieve their first full advanced (level 3) qualification as part of the **Lifetime Skills Guarantee**.
- Expand the government's flagship **Institutes of Technology** programme and continue to roll out T Levels, to prepare students for entry into skilled employment or higher levels of technical study, including apprenticeships.
- **Reform higher technical education (levels 4 and 5)** with a new approval system based on employer-led standards. Create clear progression routes for students towards the higher-level technical qualifications that employers need.
- Implement the flexible **Lifelong Loan Entitlement** to the equivalent of four years of post-18 education from 2025 - consulting on the detail and scope of the Lifelong Loan Entitlement in 2021. Introduce pilots to stimulate **higher technical education** and incentivise more **flexible and modular** provision.
- Government will use up to £43 million in 2021/22 to expand the **digital bootcamps** from April 2021 and introduce other in-demand **technical skills** such as construction, helping the country to build back better.

## Making sure people can access training and learning flexibly throughout their lives & are well-informed about what is on offer through great careers support

- There is no single place individuals can go to get government-backed, **comprehensive careers** information. This can make the careers landscape confusing, fragmented, & unclear.
- Government will address this problem by updating the **National Careers Service** website to become a single source of government-assured careers information for young people and adults. The **Careers & Enterprise Company** will encourage use of the site as part of careers education in schools and colleges.
- Government will introduce **interactive careers maps**, which will show the occupations and career options that technical or higher technical education can open the door to.
- Government will introduce a **three-point-plan to enforce the Baker Clause**:
  - a new minimum requirement about who is to be given access to which pupils and when;
  - tougher formal action against non-compliance;
  - government-funded careers support for schools to be made conditional on Baker Clause compliance.
- Alongside this, Government will lower the age range of the duty on schools to provide independent careers guidance, requiring schools to offer this **support from year seven**, bringing it in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks.

## Reforming funding & accountability for providers to simplify how funds are allocated, give providers more autonomy, & ensure an effective accountability regime which delivers value for money

- **Simplification** and **streamlining** of funding for further education to support high-value provision relevant to the labour market, with elements of simplified and streamlined funding to be tested ahead of consultation - funding flows in **adult education in particular** have become more complex and need simplifying
- Ensure that **subcontracting** practices improve educational outcomes. Encourage strong **partnership working**, which is important in **creating a strong leading role for colleges** and will address **poorly managed** subcontracted provision. Government are already taking decisive action to stop harmful subcontracting practices, and to reduce the volume.
- There are around 1,250 ITPs delivering funded provision in England and while some providers are excellent, this **crowded landscape** does not always deliver high-quality provision.
- Government will introduce a new approach to the **accountability system**, considering a **wider set** of quality measures to support provider improvement and more **timely** intervention. As part of this, government will improve their internal risk assessment and quality assurance of existing providers to intervene where government identify non-compliance or quality risks.
- ESFA will undertake a full **refresh of the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP)**, commencing in April 2021, and adopt more stringent entry criteria for both new and existing providers, to better determine whether providers have the capability and capacity to be able to deliver these higher-quality apprenticeships.



## Supporting excellent teaching in further education

- Launch a national **recruitment campaign** to communicate the opportunities in further education teaching and support prospective applicants to get started on their careers – including high-potential graduates, and **experienced industry experts**.
- Enable a strong relationship between employers and providers, so **industry experts** can move easily into teaching, and teaching staff can maintain up-to-date knowledge of their sectors.
- To support training providers, this Government will make a comprehensive package of professional development available to all apprenticeship providers and their workforce through a new national online **Apprenticeship Workforce Development programme**. This will be available to training providers for free, irrespective of whether they teach in a college or in an independent training provider.
- Introduce comprehensive **workforce data** collection.

# Apprenticeships 2021 and Beyond

- More refinement such as those currently in transit:
  - Regulation of quality is being consolidated and “strengthened” with Ofsted taking overall responsibility
  - “Strengthening and simplification” of EQA of EPA
  - Bulk transfer of unspent levy from August 2021.
  - “Portable” apprenticeships
  - Upfront block training and associated funding models.
- We know HMT would like to see a rebalancing of the system towards SMEs, young people and certainly more “new hires” – will we see more incentives to drive employer behaviours?
- The outcome of the Institute’s Funding Band methodology consultation – including specifically ineligible costs (defined by ESFA) and mandatory qualifications (including degrees).
- The Institute’s announcement that they are considering removing the need for EPA for c28 standards where there is a regulated assessment already included.
- QAR didn’t fit with standards, due to Covid-19 – New accountability framework with wider basket of measures. Also a reopening and a refresh of RoATP from April 2021.
- Big-ticket item remains: FY20-21 Apprenticeship programme overspend (£200-£300m) – not gone away, just deferred to a later date. Still need a sustainable long-term solution! DfE say money in the system.

## Apprenticeships 2021 and Beyond...

- Reminder that EPA flexibilities/discretions have been extended until August 2021- this is positive, we said last year extend until the summer avoid incremental extensions – another example as with the funding consultation of the IfATE listening and acting.
- Still picking up issues from some members about the deliverability of some EPA flexibilities – including Health & Beauty and Childcare. Some apprentices have now been on programme for nearly 12 months and lack evidence to demonstrate competency for on programme qualifications.
- Non-levy cap on starts/commitments – more members are reporting non-levy paying employers hitting the current cap of ten through the Apprenticeship Service. Positive discussions with DfE on this.
- The Plan for Jobs new hire employer apprenticeship incentives extended until the end of March 2021. Another area we have been actively discussing with the DfE. Any changes or extension likely to come in the Chancellor's Spring Package / Budget - non-committal, but we are hopeful on this.

# Ofqual/DfE Consultation Exams 2021

- Alternative arrangements to written exams are needed for those vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) that were subject to calculated results in the summer of 2020. The DfE is leaning towards “some form of teacher assessment”. Where practical assessment to demonstrate occupational competency is needed, the DfE states that this should continue subject to public health guidance.
- On-demand assessments such as functional skills (FS) assessments can go ahead in line with public health guidance. Where learners are unable to access FSQ assessments, the DfE affirms that “an **alternative method** “of awarding qualifications is needed to ensure learners’ progress.
- Following the publication of the consultation the AELP response was to warmly welcome – saying it looks like there “could be some light at the end of the tunnel.” Still a number of questions about alternative assessments and when they will be applied for learners undertaking FSQs.
- Also very concerned about the time this could take to be consulted on and then rolled out – we believe the logjam could now be nearer 60k learners impacted.
- By taking a completely different and discriminatory approach, the government is treating apprentices as second-class citizens. This is an exercise in levelling down, not levelling up. Apprentices should be teacher assessed just like pupils in schools and BTEC students. They deserve parity!

## National Skills Fund – Level 3 Adult Offer (Entitlement)

- National Skills Fund – originally a Conservative Party manifesto pledge. £3bn commitment starting from April 2021 for a 5 year period to support adult education.
- New fully funded level 3 entitlement for 24+ adults coming from April – the c£500m will also support other flexible targeted initiatives e.g. digital boot camps along side the full fat entitlement.
- Frustratingly **only supports firstness**, so if have an existing level 3 qualification and/or qualifications not in scope then advanced learning loan route will still apply.
- Information coming on soon for April-July L3 Adult Offer. The DfE has passed ring-fenced funding for the MCAs/GLA to administer and is technically not devolved or delegated.
- Interim arrangements: April – July 2021, top ups of AEB, but N.B. only 4 month delivery window!
- Medium term: August 2021 onwards funding for the new Level 3 entitlement for adults 24+ is ring-fenced & separate from normal AEB, but in essence DfE is piggybacking the ESFA procurement to get funds out.
- For the full list of courses available: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-skills-fund>

# National Adult Education Budget Procurement

- We are now expecting the ESFA to launch the National AEB in early February 2021 and the deadline for submitting bids is expected to be 6 week in order to give providers more time to respond due to operational pressures of Covid-19.
- Contracts will be for the academic year from August 2021 to July 2022 with a possibility for a further contract extension for the following academic year. Interestingly the ESFA referred to the procurement as “transitional” – but instead of referencing the delayed Devolution White Paper referenced the FE Reform White Paper instead.
- Devolved regions are not included in this process and, since the Jaggaer portal will be used, providers must be registered on it in order to apply for the ITT.
- The ESFA has made three specific clear key objectives:
  1. Helping learners gain the qualifications and skills they need to access better jobs and improve productivity.
  2. Supporting government priorities including Covid-19 economic recovery.
  3. Reducing the number of direct contracts it funds.
- In December the government published a [green paper](#) on Transforming Public Procurement and confirmed that the UK parliament had transposed a number of EU directives – including PCR 2015.

# A Day with Ofsted Reflection

- Last week, AELP hosted its annual “A Days with Ofsted” conference where Paul Joyce presented the findings of the Chief Inspector’s Report 2019/20 and it was great to see nearly 200 members attend the virtual event.
- In his key note address Paul Joyce talked about a year of “two halves” and the “heroic efforts of the sector” and how Ofsted had sort not to “overburden the sector” – his three key points being:
  - Ofsted appreciates how challenging it is in the sector at the moment.
  - Don’t worry about Ofsted – keep doing what is best for your learners.
  - But Ofsted expects to see **high quality of education taking place.**
- The proportion of FE and skills providers judged good or outstanding remained at 80%, but ITPs had the lower proportion of good or outstanding judgements, which had been dragged down by apprenticeship provision. Key themes to pick out included:
  - The transition from framework to standards, challenges on curriculum design, use of initial assessment and sequencing and accredited skills of existing employers vs developing new KSBs.
  - Failure to effectively engage employers effectively.
  - Lack of effective governance arrangements, especially in comparison to adult community learning providers.

QUESTIONS?

