



WELCOME

The publication earlier this month of the Social Mobility Commission's State of the Nation 2016 report barely made headline news. Yet its recommendations for urgent social reform cannot be brushed aside by a government that has repeatedly expressed a commitment to enabling social mobility amongst the poorest in our society.

The observations in the report about the removal of free learning for most adults and the lack of accessibility to further and higher education for older working people comes as no news to those working in the post-16 education sector. As the Shadow Minister for HE, FE & Skills, Gordon Marsden, rightly pointed out at our Access conference last month "... the government strategy for expanding higher education and skills resting on a loans for all philosophy is not always conducive to improving social mobility".

So we welcome the report's recommendation to introduce a Second Chance Career Fund to help older workers retrain and to "... write off advanced learner loans for part-time workers taking career-enhancing Level 3 qualifications". By making it affordable for adults to learn and retrain to improve their employment prospects and realise their potential, we will almost inevitably improve the life chances for their families. Educating adults helps build social and cultural capital that will in turn enhance opportunities for their children and enable social mobility. It's a win-win.

Jacquie Mutter, Chief Executive, OCN London



SPICE UP THE NEW YEAR WITH SOME QUALIFICATIONS FOR JANUARY STARTS

We have some flexible 'tasters' that combine units from a range of vocational pathways with additional units in learning, employability, literacy and numeracy. Find out more about the new [Level 1 Award in Skills for Vocational Studies](#).



QUALIFICATIONS ATTRACTING ADVANCED LEARNER LOANS

More of our national qualifications have been included in the 2016/17 [Advanced Learner Loans catalogue](#), published by the Skills Funding Agency, which is good news for centres running our qualifications. Subjects attracting loans include Business Administration, Health and Social Care, IT, Interior Design, Education and Training, Mediation and Tackling Substance Misuse. These qualifications are all available for January starts. [See the complete list of our qualifications eligible for loans](#). [Find out more about Advanced Learner Loans](#).



SHADOW EDUCATION MINISTER CALLS FOR IMPROVED SOCIAL MOBILITY

Keynote speaker at our Access to HE conference on 12 October was the Shadow Minister for HE, FE and Skills – [Gordon Marsden MP](#). Read the highlights of his inspiring speech in which he acknowledged the role of Access to HE in supporting social mobility. [Read more](#).

AUTUMN STATEMENT. GOOD NEWS FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING?

These are the main announcements (including some careful reading of the small print) in the autumn statement that will affect further education, adult education and training.

- Spending plans for further education, sixth-form colleges and adult education remain in place.
- The amount of money raised through the planned apprenticeship levy has been revised down from £3 billion to £2.8 billion – a loss of £200 million.
- Devolved powers for the adult education budget will be rolled out, starting with Greater London from 2019/20. This means that regions will be treated differently and education and training providers will have greater flexibility.
- The apprenticeship minimum wage will rise by 10p an hour from £3.40 to £3.50.
- Investment in infrastructure was a big focus.

[Read reactions from sector organisations](#). Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS DECLINE IN SOCIAL MOBILITY AND UNFAIR EDUCATION SYSTEM

A new report from the Social Mobility Commission warns that social mobility in Britain is getting worse for an entire generation of young people. 'The State of the Nation' report includes proposals to extend school sixth form provision with suggestions that schools should be given a role in supporting further education colleges to deliver the new Skills Plan. This strategy is likely to cause controversy within the further education sector which is arguing against the expansion of small sixth forms. [Read more](#).

PRISON WHITE PAPER PROMISES MAJOR OVERHAUL

The promised prison reforms, set out in the [Government White Paper on prison safety and reform](#), may not allay the current turmoil amongst prison staff. But the five-year plan that seeks to increase investment in prisons, increase staffing levels and provide more autonomy for governors is a big step forward. Justice Secretary Liz Truss said that the prison system was under "serious and sustained pressure", with missed opportunities in the past to introduce reforms. One proposal is for [an apprenticeship pathway for offenders](#), to be introduced in 2017. Read more about reactions from [AELP](#), the [Prison Reform Trust](#) and from a [FE college director of offender learning](#).

EDUCATION SECRETARY RAISES CONCERNS ABOUT POOR ATTAINMENT IN

ENGLISH AND MATHS

Justine Greening, Secretary of State for Education, tackled the subject of poor attainment in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Speaking at the annual conference of the Association of Colleges on 17 November she said that young people must not hit “a brick wall they are never going to get over” in trying to pursue qualifications for English and maths. The concern she addressed was the rising numbers of English and maths GCSE resits in colleges and the role of functional skills. [Read more.](#)

CIVIL SERVANTS TO BAN PRACTICE OF USING PUBLIC FUNDS TO PAY BROKERS FEES

An investigation into the way brokers have been charging up to five per cent commission to match subcontractors with government-funded training providers has resulted in action by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). From 1 May 2017 no government money can be used to pay brokers fees and the SFA has pledged to take action against any provider that does so. Research by *FE Week* revealed that some brokers may have earned up to £5 million over the past three year in fees. [Read more.](#)

CAREERS ADVICE IN SCHOOLS STILL POOR QUALITY

The past month has seen a flurry of reports and announcements about careers education and guidance. Following its report in 2013 which highlighted the poor quality of careers advice in schools the [House of Commons Sub-Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy](#) is calling on the government to publish a "long-promised" strategy for careers. This is needed urgently, they stress, if young people leaving full-time compulsory education are to have the right tools to plan their future careers. [Read more.](#)

SCHOOL-LEAVERS "LACK ESSENTIAL BUSINESS SKILLS"

Employers are persistently complaining that school leavers don't have workplace skills – a complaint that has been going on for decades. In a survey by the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, 4,000 finance professionals respondents said that eight out of 10 British school-leavers "lacked essential business skills" such as numeracy. The figure is worse than the previous year (2015) when 75 per cent of school leavers were said to need this level of help after being hired. [Read more.](#) [Find out about our employability skills qualifications.](#)

GENDER STEREOTYPES ABOUT CAREER CHOICES START AS YOUNG AS FOUR

The government's Social Mobility Advisory Group argues that bright students from poorly performing schools in disadvantaged areas should be given lower

entry offers by universities. In its recent review it says that higher education institutions should take account of “contextual data” so that students that have been “held back by poverty” can be given better opportunities. [Read more.](#)

JAMES DYSON TO SET UP ENGINEERING TRAINING INSTITUTE

The inventor of the cordless vacuum cleaner, Sir James Dyson, is to set up the Dyson Institute of Technology, scheduled for opening in autumn 2017. Dyson wants to address the persistent skills shortages in engineering by helping to create around one million engineers with skills in software, hardware and electronics by 2020. The £15m institute, to be based at Dyson’s campus in Malmesbury, Wiltshire, will offer a four-year engineering degree in partnership with the University of Warwick. [Read more.](#)

LEADING EDUCATION ADVISER CALLS FOR HALT IN DECLINE OF HIGHER TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS

A report by leading academic and education adviser Professor Alison Wolf for the Education Policy Institute highlighted a 36 per cent drop in the numbers of learners achieving qualifications at level 4 or above in 2014/15, compared to the previous year. She is calling on the government to stem the decline in higher level technical qualifications through the creation of a new “high status” qualifications framework that would allow delivery directly by colleges, without university involvement. [Read more.](#)

THOUSANDS MORE DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS TO BE CREATED

The government announcement of £4.5 million for the development of degree apprenticeships in England may allay some of the fears expressed by Professor Wolf. Working in partnership with leading employers, universities and colleges will offer 5,200 new opportunities for apprentices and their employers in preparation for the introduction of the apprenticeship levy in April 2017. [Read more.](#)

[Upcoming Training](#)

EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT DAY

Tuesday 10 January 2017, 10am-4pm

An introductory training day designed for tutors who are new to formal assessment or OCN London accreditation and qualifications. The day will cover an

LEVEL 3 AWARD IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Four Tuesdays - 24 and 31 January, 7 and 14 February 2017, 10am-5pm

This intensive four-day course, leading to a Level 3 Award in Education and Training, is

introduction to the principles of assessment and building learner portfolios, credit-based learning, how to select appropriate assessment methods, planning tasks and much more.

[BOOK NOW](#)

designed mainly for people who are new to teaching and training. The course covers an introduction to the teaching and training in the further education sector, including equality and diversity issues, different approaches to teaching and learning and methods of assessment. The Level 3 Award has no teaching or training practice requirement, but does have an assessment requirement of an observed micro teaching session.

[BOOK NOW](#)

Click [here](#) to visit our website and find out more about our qualifications and bespoke accreditation options.

Contact us to discuss your needs on 020 7278 5511 or email us at enquiries@ocnlondon.org.uk.



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