



Department
for Education

Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth

January 2021



Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth

**Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for Education
by Command of Her Majesty**

January 2021



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Foreword by the Secretary of State for Education



Our nation stands at a critical juncture. Like the rest of the world, we continue to deal with the coronavirus pandemic and prepare to recover and rebuild from its aftermath. It must also be our mission to forge a new identity as we seize the opportunities created by our exit from the European Union. To give ourselves the best chance of success we must make sure everyone has the skills which will allow them to get good jobs, both now and in the future.

To deliver this, the Prime Minister has introduced a Lifetime Skills Guarantee to allow everyone to access the education and training they need throughout their lives. It is our mission to make sure that opportunity is there for everyone, wherever they live, to level up every inch of the country.

These are the skills that further education is perfectly placed to provide but we have historically not always made the best use of it. Unlike many of our OECD peers, this country has not always shown further education the esteem it deserves, with too many people – and too many employers - wrongly believing that studying for a degree at university is the only worthwhile marker of success. Although our universities are world-class, it is not the only choice: in many cases, a college course or apprenticeship can offer better outcomes.

As a result we have a skills gap that is holding us back economically. We do not have enough technicians, engineers or health and social care professionals. Redressing this will be critical to improving our productivity and international competitiveness. This is why we intend to prioritise the courses and qualifications that enable people to get great jobs and which will support our economy to compete with the world's best.

This White Paper is a blueprint for the future. We will move on from previous underestimations of further and technical education and reinforce its pivotal role as a pathway to a bright future.

We are building on the success we have already achieved in reforming apprenticeships. These have been transformed from a second-rate option to a prestigious choice with excellent outcomes. We will use the national system of employer-led standards that have been created for apprenticeships as a model and will ensure employers have a central role in designing and developing qualifications and training.

This White Paper aims to strengthen links between employers and further education providers. We will place employers at the heart of defining local skills needs and explore a new role for Chambers of Commerce and other business representative organisations working with local colleges and employers. The courses offered by providers will be tailored to meet the skill needs of businesses. We will support their delivery through £1.5 billion of capital funding to improve the condition of further education colleges, a further £291 million to support 16-19-year-olds and £375 million to deliver our contribution to the Plan for Jobs in 2021-22 and start delivering our Lifetime Skills Guarantee.¹ And we need all our further education providers to be well managed, governed and have the best quality teachers and lecturers.

As the rate of technological change increases, further education will be crucial to building an agile and adaptable workforce. Provision will be flexible – whether full-time or part-time; on-the-job or off-the-job; a first ever job, or a change of career. Everyone will have the chance to retrain, update their skills and move into growth sectors, when they need to.

This White Paper is not just about a new economic dawn for the country, crucial though that it is. At its most fundamental it is about fulfilment and enrichment on a personal level. For too long we have squandered much of our latent creativity and talent: this White Paper will be the lever to unleash it. It will ensure that people can learn the skills they need to get great jobs, as well as provide the means to plan a fulfilling and productive life.



Rt. Hon. Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education

¹ Capital funding also covers Designated Institutions. [Capital allocations for FE colleges and designated institutions](#). (Education and Skills Funding Agency, 2020).

Executive Summary

1. This White Paper sets out how we will reform further education so it supports people to get the skills our economy needs throughout their lives, wherever they live in the country. Focusing post-16 skills on this core mission will increase productivity, support growth industries, and give individuals opportunities to progress in their careers. We will deliver this focus on jobs and growth by:

- Putting employers at the heart of the system so that education and training leads to jobs that can improve productivity and fill skills gaps.
- Investing in higher-level technical qualifications that provide a valuable alternative to a university degree.
- 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.
- 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.
- Supporting excellent teaching in further education.

Lifetime Skills Guarantee

2. Our reforms will deliver the Prime Minister's Lifetime Skills Guarantee, as set out in his speech in September 2020. This Government will help everyone to get the skills they need at every stage in their lives.

3. We will provide a Lifelong Loan Entitlement, the equivalent of four years of post-18 education from 2025, and we will transform the funding system so it is just as easy to get a loan for a higher technical course as it is for a full-length university degree. Wherever you are in your career, the Lifetime Skills Guarantee allows you to access the skills that you need to be successful. We will ensure everyone has access to education and training that will help them to get a great job, from our 12-16-week bootcamps to funding free qualifications for any adult without an existing full level 3 (A Level equivalent) qualification. Through our Lifetime Skills Guarantee we will invest in top-quality provision, funding upgrades to further education colleges across the country and improving our already successful apprenticeships.

The case for change

4. We are at a crossroads for our country. As we deal with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, meet our commitment for net-zero by 2050, and embrace the new opportunities that exiting the European Union brings, improving the skills of people across the country will be critical to our future success.

5. There are currently significant skills gaps at higher technical levels.² We do not have enough technicians, engineers or health and social care professionals to meet the many vital challenges we face, from building our green economy to meeting the health and care needs of our ageing population. Across a range of sectors, there is growing employer demand for the skills that higher technical education provides.³ Investing in these skills at both a local and a national level is critical to improving our productivity and international competitiveness.

6. Our skills system has been very efficient at producing graduates but has been less able to help people get the quality technical skills that employers want. Only 4% of young people achieve a qualification at higher technical level by the age of 25 compared to the 33% who get a degree or above.⁴ Moreover, only 66% of working-age graduates are in high-skilled employment.⁵ In contrast, recent analysis shows that technical courses can lead to better career outcomes for those who follow them, with men with a higher technical (level 4) qualification earning on average £5,100 more at age 30, and women with a higher technical (level 5) qualification earning £2,700 more at age 30, than those with a degree (level 6).⁶

² [Higher technical education: the current system and the case for change](#) (Department for Education, 2019); [Employer Skills Survey 2019](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

³ [Labour Market and skills projections: 2017 to 2027](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

⁴ [Post-16 education: highest level of achievement by age 25](#) (Department for Education, 2018).

⁵ [Graduate labour market statistics](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

⁶ [Post-18 Education: Who is Taking Different Routes and How Much do they Earn?](#) (Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2020).

7. We know that many careers are now accessible through technical and higher technical qualifications and higher-level apprenticeships, as well as through traditional degrees. But while these technical qualifications lead to good outcomes for individuals and the economy, colleges and independent training providers do not have enough support and incentive to offer high-value training and education. Current funding rules encourage providers to put on cheaper and lower-value courses which can be filled easily.⁷ Ringfenced funding and excessive bureaucracy also stop colleges and other providers from being as responsive and flexible as they would like.⁸

8. In addition to the problems that individual providers face, there is no mechanism to understand and address the gaps that local areas face in skills provision. Employers and providers do not always work together to agree what skills are needed to meet local labour market demands. This means that providers cannot adapt the mix of courses or develop the infrastructure and training needed to meet the skills needs of local employers. Furthermore, without a clear articulation of local and national skills needs there is limited scope for providers to work together when cooperation is required to address skills gaps.⁹

9. Finally, even where excellent opportunities to gain technical education exist, these are not always available to everyone due to student finance restrictions and a lack of flexibility in how courses are delivered.^{10,11}

⁷ As noted by the Augar Report, 'FECs are under pressure to fill their courses early in the year, leaving little opportunity for long term planning'. [Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding](#) (2019), p.126.

⁸ As noted by the Augar Report, 'Funding rules are complex and inflexible. They impose short time horizons and do not allow FE colleges to respond to local labour market needs'. [Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding](#) (2019), p. 125.

⁹ See for example [England's Skills Puzzle: Piecing Together Further Education Training & Employment](#) (Policy Connect Learning & Work Institute, 2020).

¹⁰ [Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding](#) (2019), pp.35-37.

¹¹ [Post 18 Choice of Part-Time Study](#) (2019), Table 14.

Our plan for reform

10. We are building on our successful apprenticeship reforms, where a focus on employer needs and standards transformed apprenticeships from a second-rate option to a prestigious choice. We will apply this principle across post-16 technical education and training. Using the national system of employer-led standards created for apprenticeships, we will ensure employers have a central role in designing and developing qualifications and training. Employers will also be put at the heart of identifying skills needs and helping to shape local provision through close working with colleges and other providers; we will make strategic development funding available to colleges to support this.

11. We will create the conditions for providers to deliver education and training that improves employment outcomes. Local Skills Improvement Plans will support this by bringing employers, colleges and other providers, and local stakeholders together to set out the key changes needed to make technical skills training more responsive to employers' skills needs. These plans will improve the links between employers and providers and give providers a clear articulation of skills needs in an area. Providers will be empowered to shape their provision to respond to skill needs. We will support colleges to do this through our strategic development funding.

12. We will provide greater clarity and predictability of funding for providers and more autonomy for how that funding is used. Accountability will focus on outcomes, supporting a shift towards higher-value, employment-based provision. This will allow colleges and other providers to be more flexible and innovative in how they respond to local and national skills needs.

13. We will continue to reform higher technical education, making it a true alternative to a degree by having a strong focus on quality assurance and delivering the training and education that employers want. We will make sure that people understand the benefits that technical education can offer them throughout their lives. We will increase the provision of higher-level, high-quality technical education and training through the National Skills Fund, Institutes of Technology and T Levels, and we will use our reforms to funding and accountability to encourage providers to offer more education and training at this level.

14. The new Lifelong Loan Entitlement will support increased access to high-quality technical qualifications and bring greater parity between technical and academic education. This will support the creation of a truly flexible skills system, together with offering more modular provision so people can build up learning over time and promoting flexibility through online and blended learning.

15. While being clear that the new core purpose of further education is to give people the technical skills they need to get good jobs and boost the UK's productivity, we will not forget those in need of lower level skills to help them progress. We will continue to provide support for the most vulnerable, including those with special educational needs and disabilities who rely on further education to support their personal development and access to independent living.

16. None of our reforms can be delivered without excellent teaching in further education. We will prioritise recruiting and retaining high quality staff, providing them with training and professional development and ensuring strong links between teaching staff and industry.

Summary of decisions

This White Paper sets out planned reforms to the further education and technical training system. Subject to parliamentary approval, it is the Government's intention that many of these reforms will be implemented through future primary legislation. We will also consult on proposals where appropriate and where that is the case the final policy will be subject to taking consultation responses into account. A summary of key decisions is included here.

Putting employers at the heart of post-16 skills:

- Give employers a central role working with further education colleges, other providers and local stakeholders to develop new **Local Skills Improvement Plans** which shape technical skills provision so that it meets local labour market skills needs.
- Pilot 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 we create the most effective models of employer representation before wider rollout.
- Make **Strategic Development Funding** available in 2021/22 in a number of pilot areas to support colleges to reshape their provision to address local priorities that have been agreed with local employers.
- Ensure government has up-to-date and expert advice on the labour market and national skills gaps from the **Skills and Productivity Board**.

- Align 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.
- Continue to improve and grow **apprenticeships**, so more employers and individuals can benefit from them as part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee.
- Improve 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.
- Invite proposals through the Strategic Development Fund to establish **College Business Centres** within further education colleges to work with employers in a designated sector on business development and innovation.

Providing the advanced technical and higher technical skills the nation needs:

- 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 our flagship **Institutes of Technology** programme to every part of the country by the end of this Parliament, to spearhead the increase in higher-level technical skills in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths.
- 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.

A flexible Lifetime Skills Guarantee:

- Implement the flexible **Lifelong Loan Entitlement** to the equivalent of four years of post-18 education from 2025.

- As a pathway towards the Lifelong Loan Entitlement, we will stimulate the provision of high-quality higher technical education (levels 4 and 5), as we work towards making it as easy to get a **student finance** loan for an approved Higher Technical Qualification as it is for a full-length degree.
- Introduce pilots to stimulate higher technical education and incentivise more flexible and modular provision.
- Determine how we can best stimulate credit transfer between institutions and courses.
- Consult on the detail and scope of the Lifelong Loan Entitlement in 2021.
- Improve how teaching is delivered so that it is more accessible, with the use of **digital and blended learning**.
- Provide **clear information about career outcomes** through occupational maps, wage returns data and ensuring providers give pupils information about all options.

Responsive providers supported by effective accountability, governance, and intervention

- We will **consult** on the following proposals to reform our funding and accountability system:
 - **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.
 - Give more certainty to providers over their funding, including considering how we could move to a **multi-year funding** regime.
 - Reform our accountability approach, relaxing ringfences and reporting; instead focusing on **outcomes**.
 - Introduce new accountability structures to underpin the **delivery of Local Skills Improvement Plans**.
- We will continue to invest in the college estate, to transform facilities and enable high-quality provision.

- Introduce **new powers for the Secretary of State for Education**, so the government can intervene quickly and decisively in cases where there are persistent problems that cannot otherwise be addressed, either with colleges not delivering effectively or where local providers are unable to deliver the skills priorities for that area.
- Strengthen the **governance** of colleges, by taking a clearer position on what good governance and leadership looks like and placing specific requirements on colleges and other provider types.
- Ensure that **subcontracting** practices improve educational outcomes.

Supporting outstanding teaching

- Launch a **national recruitment campaign** for teachers in further education settings.
- Base **Initial Teacher Education** on employer-led standards.
- Improve the provision of high-quality **professional development** and support progression for teachers.
- Facilitate a strong relationship between **industry** and providers.
- Support **apprenticeships** teachers and lecturers with a tailored professional development offer.
- Introduce comprehensive **workforce data collection**.

Chapter 1: Putting employers at the heart of post-16 skills

We will ensure employers are at the heart of Post-16 skills, driving technical and higher technical skills provision in their areas. To do this we will:

- Give employers a central role working with further education colleges, other providers, and local stakeholders to develop new Local Skills Improvement Plans which shape technical skills provision so that it meets local labour market needs.
- Pilot 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 we create the most effective models of employer representation before wider rollout.
- Make Strategic Development Funding available in 2021/22 in a number of pilot areas to support colleges to reshape their provision to address local priorities that have been agreed with local employers.
- Ensure government has up-to-date and expert advice on the labour market and national skills gaps from the Skills and Productivity Board.
- Align 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.
- Continue to improve and grow apprenticeships, so more employers and individuals can benefit from them as part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee.
- Improve 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.
- Invite proposals through the Strategic Development Fund to establish College Business Centres within further education colleges to work with employers in a designated sector on business development and innovation.

1. A key objective of our reforms is to ensure that the provision of technical education and training is well aligned to what employers need. This will ensure that people are able to get good jobs and make progress in their careers. To achieve this, we need more employer engagement throughout the skills system, from identifying skills needs to developing the training and qualifications to meet them. We know that access to a skilled workforce plays a key role in where businesses decide to invest, and supplying businesses with the skills they need for the future economy will be an integral part of our Industrial Strategy refresh to drive longer term growth.¹² By putting employer needs at the heart of our reforms we will ensure the UK remains a global leader in attracting international investment and employers, and in doing so support our economy.¹³

2. At the moment, employers do not have enough influence over the skills provision offered in their local area or enough say in how all technical training and qualifications are developed.¹⁴ Employers tell us they struggle to find staff to fill their skills gaps at all levels, and whilst our apprenticeships programme has been extremely successful, smaller employers are not always able to access the level of provision they need.¹⁵ Finally, our complex skills system means it can be challenging for many employers to engage with colleges and training providers effectively and make use of their facilities and expertise.

3. Our reforms will address these problems by: giving employers a central role in identifying local and national skills needs; aligning the majority of qualifications and training to employer-led standards; supporting smaller businesses to access apprenticeships; and supporting the participation in English, maths, and digital skills that employers need.

¹² [Brave new world: How COVID-19 has reshaped the outlook for FDI](#) (EY UK, 2020).

¹³ [Brave new world: How COVID-19 has reshaped the outlook for FDI](#) (EY UK, 2020).

¹⁴ See for Example [England's Skills Puzzle: Piecing Together Further Education Training & Employment](#) (Policy Connect Learning & Work Institute, 2020).

¹⁵ [Employer Skills Survey 2019: Skills Needs](#) (Government Social Research, 2020), p.32.

A tailored plan to meet local skills needs

4. We must ensure that technical skills provision is supporting the economy and responsive to local labour market needs. We will make this a reality by piloting new employer-led Local Skills Improvement Plans to set out the key changes needed to make technical skills training more responsive to employers' skills needs. These plans will be created by employers and providers, with the employers setting out a credibly articulated and evidence-based assessment of skills needs to which providers will be empowered to respond.

5. Our intention is for Local Skills Improvement Plans to provide a framework to help colleges and other providers reshape what they offer to tackle skills mismatches and ensure that they are responding as effectively as possible to labour market skills needs. The plans will ensure a better match between the supply and demand for skills training, and being locally-driven, can be tailored to the challenges and opportunities most relevant to the country's rural areas, towns and cities. They will help drive more efficient provision, with colleges and other providers working collaboratively to benefit from economies of scale and specialising in the areas in which they excel. We expect these plans to be drawn up for an initial period of three years and reviewed and updated regularly.

6. The success of Local Skills Improvement Plans will depend upon sustained and effective engagement between colleges and other providers and local employers, with employers convened and represented through established local business membership organisations. In countries with strong employer-led skills systems, such as Germany and the Netherlands, a national network of Chambers of Commerce represents employers and works closely with further education providers to co-design and co-deliver curricula. We do not have mandatory membership of Chambers of Commerce, unlike these countries, but many English Chambers already work closely with providers, are highly responsive to local business needs, and are well placed to represent the needs of local businesses.

Case study: German Chambers of Commerce

Chambers of Commerce are central to Germany's dual system of apprenticeship training, acting as a "one-stop-shop" for employer engagement. Each of the 132 chambers has specialist advisers who verify the capacity of companies and ability of trainers to train, alongside advising apprentices. They also register training contracts between the apprentice and employer, supervise workplace training, assess trainers, and conduct intermediate and final course examination. Across the country, around 300,000 skilled workers train apprentices and 180,000 volunteer to test apprentices' practical skills.

The effectiveness of this is clear. Employers recoup 69% of their total cost of training through apprentices' practical contribution to firms (2017/18), and opinion polls consistently show 70% of companies are satisfied with the Chambers.¹⁶

While we are not proposing to make membership of Chambers of Commerce compulsory, as it is in the German system, this remains a good example of how employer engagement can drive training.

7. In light of their potential benefits, we want to start piloting Local Skills Improvement Plans across the country as soon as possible. In early 2021 we will announce a group of Trailblazer local areas where we will invite accredited Chambers of Commerce and other business representative organisations to work closely with local providers to co-create the first Local Skills Improvement Plans.

8. Local Skills Improvement Plans will build on the work that Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships have done through their establishment of Skills Advisory Panels. Local Skills Improvement Plans will be informed by, and in turn inform, national skills priorities as highlighted by the new Skills and Productivity Board. However, we do not expect them to affect the important role that some providers with national reach play in supporting our national skills priorities. Mayoral Combined Authorities play a vital role across their local skills system and most already have responsibility for delivering certain adult education functions and will continue to do so. Mayoral Combined Authorities will be consulted in the development of these plans.

9. It is our intention to legislate to put the employer leadership of Local Skills Improvement Plans on a statutory footing, strengthening the voice of employers in local skills systems across the country. We will engage employer and provider groups across the country to ensure that the model of employer representation used in each local area is the most effective in supporting local skills systems.

¹⁶ The 69% is the cost of the apprentice wages in training and sundry costs versus their productive contribution to the firm, the monetary value of their work. [BIBB Report 1/2020 – Training in Germany – an investment against the shortage of skilled workers](#) (The Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB), 2020).

Investing in local skills priorities

10. Employer engagement through the development of Local Skills Improvement Plans will help colleges and other providers to strengthen relationships and partnerships with employers. This will help to shape local skills provision so it provides learners with the best chance of securing meaningful employment, as well as upskilling the existing workforce. It will also support colleges to identify where provision could be delivered more efficiently by working in partnership with others.

11. To support these changes, Government will set up a new Strategic Development Fund to facilitate changes to provision that have been endorsed by local employers. The Fund will offer capital and revenue funding to help colleges respond to locally agreed priorities. These could be investing in new or upgraded facilities and equipment, setting up a College Business Centre, or pump-priming new provision in growth areas. It will have a particular focus on supporting proposals that fill gaps in provision where it is difficult for an individual college to take action alone.

12. The new Strategic Development Fund will be piloted in a number of areas of the country and we anticipate inviting bids for funding from groups of colleges. For the Trailblazer local areas, colleges will be able to apply for funding to support the priorities identified as they work with Chambers and other business representative organisations to develop their Local Skills Improvement Plans. In other areas, colleges will need to demonstrate that they have worked with representative employer organisations and received endorsement for their bids. Further information will be announced shortly.

Case Study: Republic of Ireland's Regional Skills Fora

Improving channels and opportunities for employers to have their say and actively contribute to local skills development is a key feature of Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025.¹⁷ The Regional Skills Fora, set up in 2016, are helping to foster stronger links between employers and to strengthen further and higher education and training provision as part of regional responses.

The Skills Fora provide a number of key benefits to local employers and act as a single point of contact within the skills system. They generate more robust labour market information and analysis of employer needs to inform training and provide a ready structure for employers to become more involved in the skills system in promoting employment roles and opportunities for career progression in their sectors.

¹⁷ [National Skills Strategy 2025 – Ireland's Future](#) (Department of Education and Skills, 2016).

When the West Regional Skills Forum identified that there was a skills gap and lack of progression routes in cyber security in Galway and Mayo, they worked with local employers and international IT company Hewlett Packard Enterprise to address the problem. They completed a mapping exercise to spot gaps in the skills system and worked to deliver new courses through local education providers.

Expert advice on the labour market, from the new Skills and Productivity Board to government

13. In addition to employer engagement on local skills needs, we also need a clear and evidence-based assessment of the skills needs of the national economy. As announced in September 2020, a new Skills and Productivity Board will undertake expert analysis of national skills needs to inform government policy. The Board will be chaired by Stephen van Rooyen, CEO of Sky UK & Europe, who brings his extensive experience of business leadership to this role.

14. The independent board, composed of labour market and skills economists, will be commissioned by government ministers to provide evidence and analysis that addresses the most pressing gaps in our knowledge of the labour market. Building on the existing evidence, it will consider which skills and training add the most value to the economy, where the key skills mismatches are both now and in the future, and which courses return the best earnings for young people and adults.

15. The Education Secretary will use the Skills and Productivity Board's evidence to inform policy decisions and its evidence will also be available to local areas when they are developing their Local Skills Improvement Plans.

A national system of employer-led standards by 2030

16. Training and qualifications must meet the needs of employers. We will achieve this by aligning the vast majority of post-16 technical education and training to employer-led standards by the end of the decade, building on our apprenticeships and T Level reforms and on the recommendations of the Sainsbury Review.¹⁸

¹⁸ Standards set out the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for someone to be competent in an occupation, as determined by employers through the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. [Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education](#) (2016).

17. Using a common set of employer-led standards to define the content of technical courses, qualifications, and apprenticeships brings several benefits and efficiencies. Employers will have confidence that the knowledge and skills being delivered through technical education will meet their needs. This will allow employers to train staff at different points in their career towards the same final goal of occupational competence, whether the training is on-the-job or off-the-job. The standards will set out the technical capabilities required to be competent in that occupation, in the form of the knowledge, skills, and behaviours required to succeed in the workplace. Young people and adults, wherever in the country they study or train, will have confidence that their qualifications will prepare them for work.¹⁹

18. A clear, national system of standards, developed by leading employers working with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (the Institute), already defines the content of apprenticeships and T Levels. Such a system can be used for other technical qualifications.

19. We propose aligning advanced technical (level 3) qualifications to these standards, as set out in our second stage consultation on the post-16 qualifications review.²⁰ The consultation proposes reducing the advanced technical (level 3) offer so it focuses on fewer, high-quality, employer-led qualifications that are needed alongside T Levels. However, our reforms will not stop there. We are also exploring through the *level 2 and below call for evidence* where qualifications at intermediate level (level 2) can be aligned to employer-led standards. Study at intermediate level (level 2) and below is particularly important for learners with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) who are overrepresented at these levels, and we are seeking views on the provision and qualifications that should be retained and improved to meet their needs.²¹

¹⁹ [Review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England: Second Stage, Government consultation](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

²⁰ [Review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England: Second Stage, Government consultation](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

²¹ [Level 2 and 3 attainment by young people aged 19 in 2019](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

20. We will also ensure effective, streamlined regulation and quality assurance of the technical qualifications derived from employer-led standards. In particular, the Institute and the Office of Qualifications and Examination Regulations (Ofqual) are building a strong partnership model that covers all technical education qualifications in which they have a role. This will make the best use of their respective expertise and avoid duplication. The Institute will approve technical qualifications based on employer-led standards, using a streamlined approval process that takes account of Ofqual advice. This unified process will ensure high standards of assessment and awarding as well as alignment with the relevant employer-led standards. Once approved by the Institute, technical qualifications will be regulated by Ofqual, in line with existing practice, working in consultation with the Institute, to ensure that standards of assessment and grading are high and consistent over time. In addition, we will extend the Institute's remit so it can operate effectively in a reformed system, including by approving more technical education and training provision against employer-led standards.

21. Slightly different arrangements will apply to Higher Technical Qualifications (those at levels 4 and 5). For these qualifications, which are provided by awarding organisations, higher education providers, and professional bodies, the Institute has introduced a new approval system based on the national system of employer-led standards that is already used for higher apprenticeships. By signalling which Higher Technical Qualifications meet these standards, and working with the Office for Students, we will send a clear message to prospective students about which Higher Technical Qualifications are high-quality and really valued in the labour market.

Apprenticeships that work for all employers

22. Employer-led standards have helped us to transform apprenticeships into a prestigious programme that better meets the needs of employers across the country. We have seen over 440,000 apprentices start the new, employer-led standards between the 2014/15 and 2018/19 academic years.²² However, as set out in the Prime Minister's speech on the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, we have further to go to make sure more employers can benefit from the programme while continuing to raise the quality even further.

²² [Apprenticeship starts by pathway 2014/15 to 2018/19](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

23. We will focus on three key areas. Firstly, we will support more people to start apprenticeships, helping employers to recover from the coronavirus pandemic with the skilled employees they need to grow. Secondly, we 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, we will raise quality, ensuring that every apprentice has the best experience and reaches their potential.

24. As the Prime Minister announced, we will make funding available to enable more employers to take on apprentices. Smaller employers are important because they help increase opportunities, particularly for young people, to embark on apprenticeships across the country.²³ We want to address the fall in apprenticeship starts since 2017 for employers that do not pay the Apprenticeship Levy, which has been even more pronounced during the coronavirus pandemic.²⁴ ²⁵ In 2021-22, we are making £2.5 billion available to support apprenticeships – including for employers who do not pay the levy, who will continue to be able to reserve funding for 95% of apprenticeship training and assessment costs. This will enable smaller employers to access the apprenticeships they need as they move onto the apprenticeship service and gain greater control over their apprenticeship choices.

25. Smaller employers are already benefiting from transfers from levy-paying employers, with larger employers using transfers to encourage apprenticeship starts and build stronger skills through all sectors and parts of the economy.²⁶ From August 2021, we will enable levy-paying employers to pledge specific amounts of their funds as available for transfer. At the same time, we will launch an online matching service to help levy-paying employers find small employers to transfer funds to. By improving the transfer process, we will help levy-paying employers make greater use of their funds to support their supply chains and local areas, and increase the transparency of how their funds are being used.

²³ While starts not funded by the levy accounted for a third of all starts in 2019/20, they accounted for 59% of starts aged 16 to 18. [Explore Education Statistics: 'Subjects and levels - apprenticeship levy' from 'Apprenticeships and traineeships'](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

²⁴ In 2018/19, starts in SMEs were down 43% compared to pre-reform while starts among large employers were up 7%. [Apprenticeships in England by Industry Characteristics 2018 to 2019](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

²⁵ Between April and July 2020, levy funded starts were down 37% on the same period in 2019 – compared to a 65% drop in starts not funded by the levy. [Explore Education Statistics: 'Monthly apprenticeship starts' from 'Apprenticeships and traineeships'](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

²⁶ As of 1 December 2020, there have been 7,840 apprenticeship service commitments entered into the apprenticeship service (since August 2018) where the transfer of funds between ASAs has been approved. Of these 7,840 transferred commitments, 34.5% (2,710) were transfers to levy-paying organisations and 65.5% (5,140) were transfers to non-levy-paying. [Explore Education Statistics: 'Apprenticeships and traineeships'](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

26. We are increasing our focus on sectors with existing and emerging skills needs, guided by the Government's national skills priorities. We are already engaging with the construction, manufacturing, public, health and social care, digital and creative sectors to understand and tackle the specific barriers these sectors face in making full use of apprenticeships.

27. We have heard from the construction and creative sectors that one of the barriers is the varied and flexible employment patterns that mean an apprentice and their employer are unable to commit to the minimum 12-month apprenticeship duration. We want to support apprentices and employers to make use of apprenticeships in sectors where short-term, project-based employment is the norm, and we will seek to develop our online apprenticeship service to make it easier for this to happen. Sectoral apprenticeship agencies may offer one solution, giving constant employment to an individual during the life of their apprenticeship which allows them to move between work placements and continue their training. We are working with Screenskills and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport to test a new apprenticeship agency in the film and television sector in 2021, and we are working with employers in other sectors to consider whether such agencies could increase the use of apprenticeships.

28. Through our ongoing engagement with apprentice employers, we have seen that front-loaded training can work in a number of sectors, giving the apprentice a greater level of training at the start of their apprenticeship to prepare them to enter the workplace. We will start by supporting this delivery model in priority construction standards from April 2021, followed by health and social care, while also considering the further steps we could take to encourage training providers to adapt the structure of their programmes to better meet employers' needs.

29. While apprenticeships will continue to require a minimum duration of 12 months with at least 20% of an apprentice's time spent in off-the-job training, we will work with employers, training providers, and the Institute to enable apprentices with significant prior learning to reduce the duration of their apprenticeship and reach occupational competence more quickly. We will create clear pathways for learners who are progressing from other formal training routes. We will test whether the successful completion of a bootcamp can be formally recognised as prior learning for an apprenticeship and will evaluate this new approach in spring 2021. We will seek to build on this by examining how we can support better transition into apprenticeships from T Levels and traineeships. We are already developing a bespoke construction traineeship that will offer a clear route into a shorter apprenticeship. For apprentices with considerable relevant experience, we want to support training providers so that they better recognise this experience during the prior learning assessment and account for this in the training.

30. We will work with the Institute to identify and prioritise the development and delivery of standards that will have the greatest positive impact for employers and apprentices. We will do this by focusing on those that have the highest levels of employer demand, or meet skills shortages, acknowledging that these may have evolved due to the coronavirus pandemic.

31. Employers and apprentices should have confidence in the rigour, high standards, and exceptional quality of apprenticeships. We will provide tools, advice, and guidance to support employers to give their apprentices a high-quality experience. This will include: a quality roadmap that benchmarks what a high-quality apprenticeship programme looks like; a linked self-assessment tool for use by both employers and providers; and support for employers who may be experiencing problems with apprenticeship provision. We will also be implementing the Augar Report recommendation to make Ofsted the lead responsible body for inspecting apprenticeships training quality at all levels.²⁷

32. We will improve the value and prestige associated with the successful completion of an apprenticeship for employers and apprentices, including developing enhanced apprenticeship certificates and providing support for graduation ceremonies.

33. We will focus on progression, and transferable skills and knowledge, working with the Institute to make sure that the development of all new standards considers progression within and across occupations. Apprenticeships can provide the foundations for further career progression; we will further promote the opportunities that become available upon the completion of apprenticeships, for example higher levels of apprenticeships or technical training.

34. We must also ensure that apprenticeships are providing good value-for-money for employers. The Institute will develop a new, improved model for determining the funding band for each standard which will support greater transparency, value-for-money, and consistency, using independent data. Subject to a successful pilot, this will be implemented in 2021.

²⁷ [Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding](#) (2019), p.154.

Improved traineeships

35. For young people who are not yet ready for an apprenticeship, employment, or further study, our traineeships offer a first step towards these by providing work experience and sector-based occupational skills. Since 2013 we have seen positive impacts from traineeships, with 66% of trainees starting an apprenticeship, employment, or further learning within six months of starting their traineeship in 2017/18.²⁸ There are also higher proportions of under-represented groups among trainees than among apprentices, such as learners with learning difficulties and ethnic minority groups.²⁹

36. We are increasing our investment in traineeships to address a rise in unemployment due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. We have also introduced greater flexibilities to traineeships to improve quality and respond to employers' needs, including:

- Opening them up to young people with an advanced (level 3) qualification.
- A stronger technical offer focused on training young people, with content aligned to employer-led standards to better prepare them for apprenticeships.
- More flexible work experience of between 70 and 240 hours.
- An increase in duration of up to 12 months to help those young people affected by the coronavirus pandemic and those who need more support to gain the basic skills that employers need.

37. We will now drive quality up by going further in linking traineeships to apprenticeships in growth sectors such as construction and digital. These sector-specific traineeships will better align the content of traineeships to the national system of employer-led standards, giving more trainees a better experience and employers greater confidence in offering work placements and taking on trainees. This builds on the positive feedback we have seen in our Traineeship Evaluations where trainees expect that having sector-specific content would make them more attractive to employers by giving them skills that they can apply to the workplace and help them secure progression to employment opportunities.³⁰

²⁸ [Explore Education Statistics: Further education outcome-based success measures: 2016 to 2017](#), (Department for Education, 2020).

²⁹ [National Statistics: Further education and skills: November 2019](#) (Department for Education, 2019), Table 7.

³⁰ [Traineeships: First year process evaluation](#) (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2015); [Traineeships: Year two process evaluation](#) (Department for Education, 2017).

English, maths, and digital skills for everyone

38. Most occupations require competence in English, maths, and digital skills.³¹ However, 49% of adults have numeracy skills no better than the level expected of an 11-year-old; for literacy, it is 15%.³² 52% of the workforce do not have essential digital skills for work.³³ We need to address this so employers get the competent staff they need and people without these skills can develop them in order to find a good job, or progress their careers.

39. Our reforms to date encourage people to gain these basic skills by requiring 16-19-year-old students without an approved intermediate level (level 2) in English and maths to continue studying these subjects. Achieving an approved qualification at this level is also an exit requirement for T Levels and is necessary to complete an advanced technical (level 3) or higher apprenticeship. In addition, under our legal entitlements, any adult who does not already have an intermediate (level 2) qualification in English and/or maths can be fully funded to study these qualifications. Our qualifications reforms mean we now have GCSEs and Functional Skills as the qualifications of choice. In addition, through the Centres for Excellence in Maths programme we are improving the quality of teaching by embedding maths mastery nationally to support students aged 16-18 studying GCSEs, no matter which pathway they are on.

40. In August 2020, we introduced the digital entitlement for adults who need essential digital skills for work, giving free access to new digital skills qualifications based on our employer-supported national standards. Only new digital skills qualifications based on our national standards will be publicly funded, providing a clear set of high-quality options. In line with the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, we will make essential digital skills provision more accessible and flexible by building on the innovation in online learning implemented during the coronavirus pandemic, such as the Skills Toolkit. This will mean that all adults can gain essential digital skills at a time and place that suits them. We will reform and update the digital entitlement accordingly to ensure it is meeting the needs of learners and supports the Government's ongoing commitment to improving essential digital skills.

³¹ [Educating for the modern world](#) (Confederation of British Industry, 2018), p.22; [No Longer Optional: Employer Demand for Digital Skills](#) (Burning Glass Technologies and Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2019), p.31.

³² [The 2011 Skills for Life Survey: a Survey of Literacy, Numeracy, and ICT Levels in England](#) (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2012).

³³ [Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2020](#) (Lloyds Bank, 2020).

41. We will ensure those with special educational needs continue to gain direct work-related skills alongside maths and English to increase their employability. We will support students with Education, Health and Care plans to the age of 25 with individuals studying the same programmes as their peers where they have the capability to do so. The cross-government SEND Review, which is currently underway, will consider the support needed for young people with SEND in post-16 provision.

42. We believe that everyone who lives in England should have the opportunity to learn to speak English so that they can participate in our labour market and civil society. Our commitment to boost English language provision for existing migrants will be a key part of the future adult skills system to help people to achieve and progress through employer-recognised, high-quality qualifications.

Further education colleges as centres for business development and innovation

43. The reforms we have set out above will embed employers' needs into our skills system. But there is more we can do to enable direct engagement between colleges and employers. We know colleges have a unique ability to connect employers to learners. Furthermore, they have technical facilities and industry expertise that businesses, especially small ones, may not otherwise be able to access.

44. Responses to the Association of Colleges' 2020 Innovation Survey show that many colleges already engage with employers in multiple ways - with a real appetite to develop their offer to businesses. The survey findings point to a need for support to overcome barriers that stand in their way, including investment in industry grade equipment and more staff time devoted to employer engagement and support.³⁴

³⁴ [Innovation in Further Education Colleges Summer 2020: AoC survey](#) (Association of Colleges, 2020).

45. We will encourage colleges to put forward proposals to establish pathfinder College Business Centres concentrating on local priority sectors, and we will offer support through the Strategic Development Fund. The focus of College Business Centres will be on supporting local businesses to increase levels of innovation and productivity by: meeting and driving demand for technical skills by harnessing business intelligence to improve education provision so that learners develop skills that employers need and that lead to rewarding work; by supporting employers to understand how investment in skills, new technology and innovative practices can drive increased productivity; and by nurturing the development of entrepreneurial talent.

46. By bringing employers and providers together, College Business Centres can help employers better identify and communicate their skills needs – ensuring a more forward-looking local skills offer. They would also be expected to connect employers to colleges' technical expertise and facilities, helping them identify and adopt new approaches that can increase competitiveness. The College Business Centre model can complement the range of business support services already available across the country, ensuring that the unique resources of colleges enhance that offer.

47. We anticipate funding a small number of College Business Centre pathfinders in 2021. Proposals will need to demonstrate evidence of need and backing from local businesses in the relevant sectors. We will undertake an assessment of the roll out of any College Business Centres supported through the Strategic Development Fund, to facilitate and encourage more colleges to develop this type of service.

48. We will also explore how to support employers to access and navigate the whole skills system. We will take a user-centred approach, working closely with employers to identify solutions. Our aim is to ensure all employers, particularly small and medium-sized businesses, and those who find the current system hard to engage with, have clear access routes and can navigate the skills offers provided in further education. This work will provide clarity on what we want from employers in the skills system, bringing them in as co-creators and co-deliverers of skills rather than far-removed customers.

Chapter 2: Providing the advanced technical and higher technical skills the nation needs

We are making progression to advanced and higher technical study a core purpose of our skills reforms, enabling people to get great jobs in areas our economy needs. To achieve this, we will:

- Use the £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 targeted at courses that will improve their job prospects.
- Expand our flagship Institutes of Technology programme to every part of the country by the end of this Parliament, to spearhead the increase in higher-level technical skills in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths.
- 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 (level 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.

49. We have a skills system that has historically been effective at producing graduates, but less suited to helping people achieve good quality higher technical skills. The majority of people study at foundation and intermediate levels (up to level 2) or at degree level (level 6 and above), with relatively fewer people gaining higher technical skills (levels 4 and 5).³⁵ Only 4% of young people achieve a higher technical qualification as their highest level by the age of 25, while by comparison 37% of 25-year-olds have only achieved an intermediate (level 2) qualification or below, as their highest level qualification, and 33% achieve a degree level (level 6) qualification or above.³⁶ This is despite employers reporting that they demand skills in key industries like manufacturing and construction, which utilise higher technical skills.³⁷

50. We have a significant shortage of vital technician-level STEM skills, for example in engineering-related occupations which will help drive innovation and growth. This shortage is down to a lack of people leaving education with high-quality technical skills over the last 20 years.³⁸

51. Participation is much lower than in many of our more productive international counterparts. We need to support the improvement of skills at the right level if we are to close the gap with international competitors. For example, only 10% of all adults aged 20-45 hold a level 4-5 qualification as their highest compared to around 20% of adults in Germany, and as many as 34% in Canada.³⁹

52. We will increase the number of people with higher technical skills by improving and increasing provision at this level and offering progression routes so more people can access these opportunities. Alongside this, we will reform funding and accountability so providers have an incentive to offer higher-level technical provision (Chapter 4). We will increase flexibility and loan provision so individuals can access this learning in a way that suits them (Chapter 3) and recruit more staff with the expertise to teach higher-level qualifications (Chapter 5).

³⁵ [Damian Hinds Technical Education Speech](#) (Department for Education and The Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP, 2018).

³⁶ [Post-16 education: highest level of achievement by age 25](#) (Department for Education, 2018).

³⁷ [Employer Skills Survey 2019](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

³⁸ [Delivering STEM \(science, technology, engineering and mathematics\) skills for the economy](#) (National Audit Office 2018), p.21.

³⁹ [OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training: Skills beyond School Synthesis Report](#) (OECD, 2014).

The National Skills Fund will boost adult learning at advanced technical and higher technical levels

53. It is essential that we invest in education and training for the over 30 million people already in the workforce, giving them the skills they need to progress, and driving productivity growth for companies across the country.⁴⁰ 80% of the workforce of 2030 are already in work today, and we need to offer them the opportunity to upskill and reskill over their careers.⁴¹ It is also vital that we equip people to recover economically from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Between 2011/2012 and 2018/19, adult participation in further education has decreased by over one million learners, from 3.1 million to 2.1 million; our new £2.5 billion National Skills Fund through which we will deliver key elements of the Prime Minister's Lifetime Skills Guarantee, will begin to reverse this decline.^{42 43}

54. Starting from April 2021, any adult looking to achieve their first full advanced level (level 3) qualification, which is equivalent to an advanced technical certificate or diploma, or two full A Levels, will be able to access a free, fully funded course as part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee. These courses will improve people's employment prospects and open up new opportunities, giving adults the qualifications they need, when they need them. We want the provision made available through this offer to have the strongest benefits for individuals, the economy, and the nation. This means the offer will adapt to ensure it meets the needs of the labour market and to meet key skills priorities for the future, such as our commitment to achieve net-zero.

55. We will also work with employers to design and deliver short-duration advanced training. As part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, employer-led digital bootcamps are a flexible way to gain high-quality skills that are relevant to employers. From September 2020 to March 2021, we are investing £8 million to train adults in digital skills through an innovative, employer-led digital training initiative, helping adults of all ages to learn IT skills. Employers will select, or co-design with providers, short and flexible training lasting between 12 and 16 weeks which will meet critical skills needs and help adults to retrain, top up skills, or gain new specialist skills.

⁴⁰ [Labour market overview, UK: September 2020](#) (Office for National Statistics, 2020).

⁴¹ [UK Skills Mismatch in 2030: Research Paper](#) (Industrial Strategy Council, 2019).

⁴² [Explore Education Statistics: Further education and skills, Academic Year 2019/20](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

⁴³ [Adult Participation in Learning Survey 2019](#) (Learning and Work Institute, 2019).

56. Through a fast track to interviews, these bootcamps will offer a direct line of sight to work for their participants. We will start by delivering digital bootcamps in six areas: West Midlands, Greater Manchester/Lancashire, Liverpool City Region, West Yorkshire, East Midlands, and the South West. We will expand to other skills, such as those needed by the nuclear industry, from January 2021. We 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.

Case Study: West Midlands “Beat the Bots Bootcamp”

In 2019, the West Midlands Combined Authority launched a £5 million grant-funded digital skills pilot, Beat the Bots, to address a skills mismatch in the local economy. Regional vacancy survey data suggested that the top 10 in-demand roles were related to software, data, and cloud computing. However, there was a lack of people qualified at technician level, which is where most job vacancies were.

The employer-led Beat the Bots programme is delivering training for up to 1,900 people in the West Midlands from 2019 to 2022. The courses provide participants with key digital skills for the future of employment, such as in cyber security, full stack web development, machine learning, and project management. Each place on the course leads to a guaranteed interview.

This pilot is training the region’s workers for current and future local jobs, and its short, flexible delivery opens up access to roles in the technology sector to a broader group of young people and adults. Employers have fed back that they have been impressed by the motivation of participants and the level of practical skills they have developed. These skills are paying off for individuals who want to develop in their careers, with one employer reporting that they made offers to three individuals from the bootcamp, and hired one of the three, whilst the other two accepted jobs elsewhere. He explained ‘the nature of the bootcamp set up here is that it gets you into a job’.

57. We will fund the High-Value Manufacturing Catapult's 'Skills Value Chain'.⁴⁴ This process assesses future skills needs in manufacturing, develops courses to meet these needs, and makes those courses widely available through high-quality providers such as Institutes of Technology. It will support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to work with emerging technologies in the manufacturing sector, such as electrification, additive manufacturing, and metrology. We will then explore whether this Skills Value Chain approach can be used in other emerging skills areas and to support Government priorities such as net zero.

58. We will set out further plans to use the National Skills Fund in due course, consulting on the details in spring 2021 to ensure that the investment from the Fund helps to meet the needs of adults, employers and providers.

Institutes of Technology increasing higher level STEM skills through collaboration

59. Institutes of Technology (IoTs) are unique collaborations between further education colleges, universities and leading employers. They have access to state-of-the-art equipment and facilities, and benefit from support from local employers and partners, who contribute resources such as further investment, seconded teaching staff, and equipment. Their focus on collaboration between different types of provider and employers, underpinned by capital investment to expand provision, represents an exciting new model for skills delivery.

60. The Institutes of Technology programme's objective is to deliver higher-level technical education with a clear route to high-skilled employment focusing on STEM skills in areas like advanced manufacturing, infrastructure, digital, and life sciences.

61. Over the coming decade we will need STEM skills at all levels,⁴⁵ from advanced specialisation in our world class universities, to higher technical skills delivered by Institutes of Technology. Our IoTs aim to unlock a wealth of new talent for employers, by targeting disadvantaged groups in their local areas, as well as increasing the representation of women in STEM.

⁴⁴ The High-Value Manufacturing Catapult is a centre for innovation that harnesses technology advancements and bridges the gap between academia and the private sector.

⁴⁵ [UK Skills Mismatch in 2030: Research Paper](#) (Industrial Strategy Council, 2019).

62. The first wave of 12 IoTs is currently being established across the country and we will expand this model further. The Wave Two Competition is expected to conclude in summer 2021 with eight IoTs selected. We will begin to roll out Wave Two IoTs as early as the 2021/22 academic year. By the end of this Parliament, there will be 20 IoTs covering every area of England, making them the 'go-to' providers for higher technical STEM education and training.

Case Study: Greater Birmingham and Solihull (GBS) Institute of Technology

Greater Birmingham and Solihull (GBS) IoT is operational and has a curriculum focus on engineering and advanced manufacturing including future developments in industry.

It is investing in a cyber physical manufacturing rig, which is the centrepiece of the IoT's capital investment and will act as a 'learning factory' for both learners and employers to engage them in the latest manufacturing technology and help them understand the importance of skills in developing their business and competing in the marketplace. The rig is part of a £9 million Department for Education capital investment across four delivery sites in the Greater Birmingham area. The IoT has strong buy-in and commitments from key local employers like Bosch Thermotechnology and Continental Engineering. An Employer Advisory Board is working with the IoT to develop the curriculum and inform the capital investment.

T Levels: a prestigious technical programme

63. In September 2020, students across England started on the first ever T Levels. The first three T Levels are in Construction, Digital, and Education & Childcare, and a further seven will be introduced in 2021. We are proud of this programme, which is based on employer-led standards and offers a prestigious technical alternative to A Levels. From 2023, we expect that 24 T Levels covering 11 technical education routes will be available to students.

64. T Levels will be the option of choice for the majority of 16- to 19-year-olds who want to progress into skilled employment or onto higher levels of technical education. Students completing T Levels will be awarded UCAS tariff points in line with three A Levels, supporting progression to higher education in related technical areas if they choose. They have been designed by learning from the best technical education systems in the world. Around 300 employers have been involved in setting content, and thousands more will be offering industry placements to young people as T Levels become embedded as the mainstream technical offer.

65. T Levels are designed to prepare students for entry into skilled employment, in some cases through an apprenticeship, or for higher levels of technical study at college or university. Students spend most of the course in classrooms and specialist training facilities, developing the knowledge, skills and behaviours that employers need for their chosen occupation. They also spend at least 45 days on a meaningful industry placement, putting the skills they have developed into practice and gaining first-hand experience of industry. This combination of provision enables people to leave education well prepared to be successful and productive in their chosen occupation – and provides employers with a pipeline of job-ready employees.

66. We want as many people as possible to benefit from T Levels. We are consulting on adaptations that could be introduced to make them more appropriate for learners with prior experience and flexible delivery needs as part of the Review of Post-16 qualifications.

Reformed higher technical education (levels 4 and 5)

67. The higher technical qualifications landscape is crowded and confusing. In 2016/17, there were over 4,000 qualifications available at levels 4 and 5, with no national assurance of which qualifications provide the skills employers need.⁴⁶ This lack of clarity and accountability has led to varying quality for learners and employers, and a lack of awareness of the many benefits of undertaking qualifications at this level.⁴⁷ As a result, young people and adults with the ability and attainment to go beyond an advanced technical level (level 3) qualification are missing out on the high-wage, high-skilled jobs to which higher technical education can open the door.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ [Review of the Level 4-5 qualification and provider market: Research report](#) (Department for Education and Government Social Research, 2019).

⁴⁷ [Higher technical education: the current system and the case for change](#) (Department for Education, 2019).

⁴⁸ [Post-18 Education: Who is Taking Different Routes and How Much do they Earn?](#) (Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2020).

68. We have already started to reform higher technical education to make it a more popular and prestigious choice.⁴⁹ In July 2020, reflecting key recommendations of both the Augar and Sainsbury Reports, we committed to establishing a system of higher technical education where learners and employers can have confidence in high-quality courses and qualifications that provide the knowledge and skills that they need.⁵⁰⁵¹ This included commitments to: introduce a national approvals process to show which higher technical qualifications meet employers' skills needs; to improve the quality of provision through support for providers; and to raise awareness and understanding through a government-backed communications campaign and improved information and guidance.

69. To help deliver this system, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (the Institute) has introduced a new system for approval of higher technical qualifications, based on the national system of employer-led standards. Approval will lead to a kitemark that signals national labour market currency. The Institute opened the first wave of approvals to applications for the Digital route on 23 September 2020, for delivery from 2022. We plan to have a phased, multi-year roll-out of approved Higher Technical Qualifications, with different occupational routes coming on stream over a four year period. This will begin with the Digital route in 2022, followed by the Construction route and Health and Science route in 2023. The future roll-out pattern will continue to broadly align with Government priorities and early T Level waves.

70. We will support providers to expand their high-quality higher technical education provision, including through the National Skills Fund. We will continue to improve access to higher technical courses through the Lifetime Skills Guarantee. This is covered in more detail in Chapter 3.

⁴⁹ [Reforming Higher Technical Education: Government consultation response](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

⁵⁰ [Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding](#) (2019), p.145.

⁵¹ [Post-16 skills plan and independent report on technical education](#) (Department for Education and Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2016).

71. To minimise the burdens on providers while the higher technical education market is developing, we will use the existing quality assurance mechanism of Office for Students (OfS) registration to quality assure providers delivering approved Higher Technical Qualifications, starting with those that are approved in the first wave of digital qualifications from 2022. We will work with OfS and Ofsted, drawing on their regulatory and inspection expertise, to develop long-term quality assurance arrangements for Higher Technical Qualifications which we will introduce from 2023. We will introduce a more consistent approach to assuring the quality of technical education providers, including apprenticeships, at all levels. From 2023, we will look to reduce funding for non-approved higher technical qualifications.

72. Our reforms will ensure the quality of higher technical qualifications, giving employers and applicants confidence in their value. Further education colleges – particularly those involved in Institutes of Technology – will expand their provision of higher technical education in responding to, and driving up, labour market demand in regions across the country.

Clear progression routes for students, with more attaining the higher-level skills that employers need

73. In addition to reforming qualifications, we need to ensure that there are clear pathways for young people and adults to progress to higher-level training. The first tranche of approved Higher Technical Qualifications will be introduced from 2022, as a natural progression for the first students completing T Levels. We will raise the profile and understanding of the best higher technical courses with a government-backed brand and communications campaign so people have confidence in the qualifications and know what opportunities they offer.

74. We are already taking steps to increase this focus on progression. Ofsted has recently moved towards a greater focus on progression in their inspection framework; it now takes into account whether leaders and teaching staff offer a purposeful curriculum that provides progression and stretch. In addition, we will ensure that performance metrics more clearly demonstrate how well individual providers are helping students to progress and achieve at advanced technical (level 3) and higher technical levels (level 4-5). This will be done through changes to 16-18 published performance tables (once reintroduced following the coronavirus pandemic), National Achievement Rate Tables (Qualification Achievement Rates), and our further education outcomes-based success measures publication. We will take forward development of these metrics alongside the wider review of the accountability system set out in Chapter 4.

75. Many students will need support to help them access advanced technical or higher technical education. The Sainsbury Review recommended an additional ‘transition year’ for anyone not ready to access academic or technical education.⁵² In line with this recommendation, we began the phased implementation of our T Level transition programme in September 2020. It is a tailored preparatory programme for students who are not ready to start a T Level but have the potential to progress onto one. We also set out in the *Post-16 study at level 2 and below: call for evidence* that we want to do more to support students to progress onto other advanced technical (level 3) qualifications and explore whether additional forms of transition would benefit these students.⁵³

⁵² [Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education](#) (2016).

⁵³ [Post-16 study at level 2 and below: call for evidence](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

Poppy – TV and Film Studies

“Hi, I’m Poppy, I started studying at sixth form and did my first year of A Levels. I didn’t feel like I was doing great in my courses and I wanted to study TV and Film. Nobody said that college was an option, so I explored it on my own. I joined my local college and started my course two years ago. I really enjoyed it and have now completed it.

When I was at sixth form I knew that college was an option but it almost felt like college was where you would go if you failed your Maths and English, or if you didn’t want to do A Levels. I don’t think college was advertised as being a really great place to go and progress. Now that I have been to college, I’ve seen what the opportunities are here and would have come here straight away.”

In our reformed FE system this is how Poppy’s journey might look:

Poppy gets help and support from her school, she explores the different options, and she arranges a visit to her local further education college open day, where she can speak to course tutors.

Poppy finds out that instead of A Levels, she could do a T Level in media, broadcast and production that would be worth the same as three A Levels, so she will end up being at the same level as her friends who have opted for A Levels, with the bonus that she can get real hands-on experience in the workplace, something that really interests her.

Poppy opts for a T Level at her local college which includes classroom study with expert teachers that have industry experience, use of specialist facilities and equipment, and a placement working in film production. This will give her a head start towards a career but also allow her to keep her options open if she later decides to go on to higher education in a college or university.

Chapter 3: A Flexible Lifetime Skills Guarantee

Our Lifetime Skills Guarantee will ensure that no matter where you start from, or what your circumstances, there will be a flexible, high-quality technical education route available to you, at different points throughout your life, supported by the trusted careers information you need to choose the option that is best for you. To achieve this we will:

- Implement the flexible Lifelong Loan Entitlement to the equivalent of four years of post-18 education from 2025.
- As a pathway towards the Lifelong Loan Entitlement, we will stimulate the provision of high-quality higher technical education (levels 4 and 5), as we work towards making it as easy to get a student finance loan for an approved Higher Technical Qualification as it is for a degree.
- Introduce pilots to stimulate higher technical education and incentivise more flexible and modular provision.
- Determine how we can best stimulate credit transfer between institutions and courses.
- Consult on the detail and scope of the Lifelong Loan Entitlement in 2021.
- A £95 million offer, in 2021-22, for adults without an existing level 3 (A Level equivalent) qualification, targeted at courses that will improve their job prospects.⁵⁴
- Improve how teaching is delivered so that it is more accessible, with the use of digital and blended learning.
- Provide clear information about career outcomes through occupational maps, wage returns data, and ensuring providers give pupils information about all options.

76. In his speech on 29 September 2020, the Prime Minister announced the Lifetime Skills Guarantee to give people the opportunity to train, retrain and upskill throughout their lives to respond to changing skills needs and employment patterns.

⁵⁴ For more details on the level 3 entitlement please see Chapter 2: *Providing the advanced technical and higher technical skills the nation needs*.

77. A key component of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee will be the Lifelong Loan Entitlement. This will provide individuals with a loan entitlement to the equivalent of four years' worth of post-18 education to use over their lifetime. We want every student with the aptitude and the desire to go to university to get the support they need, but we also want everyone to be given a real choice in life, and not to feel there is only one route to success. Many learners need to access courses in a more flexible way, to fit study around work, family and personal commitments, and to retrain as both their circumstances and the economy change.⁵⁵ Alongside the excellent opportunities afforded through apprenticeships, the Lifelong Loan Entitlement means people will have a real choice in how and when they study so that they can acquire new life-changing skills.

78. The Lifelong Loan Entitlement will deliver a major transformation in further and higher education. It will create a more efficient and streamlined funding system, make it easier for students to navigate the options available and encourage provision to better meet the needs of people, employers and the economy. The loan entitlement will be useable for modules at higher technical and degree levels (levels 4 to 6) regardless of whether they are provided in colleges or universities, as well as for full years of study. It will make it easier for adults and young people to study more flexibly – allowing them to space out their studies, transfer credits between institutions, and partake in more part-time study.

79. The introduction of a Lifelong Loan Entitlement was a key recommendation from the Augar Report.⁵⁶ It was also endorsed in the House of Lords Report that recommended 'funding for modules or credit where a full degree is not required', stating that its proposals 'should facilitate transfer between different institutions'.⁵⁷

80. Delivering this vision will require extensive changes to the student finance system and to the types of courses available. It will require action from government and providers to create and adapt to this new model. But it is a change we must make to introduce a truly flexible approach to lifelong learning.

⁵⁵ [Post 18 Choice of Part-Time Study: Research report](#) (Department for Education and Government Social Research, 2019), Table 14.

⁵⁶ [Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding](#) (2019), p.206.

⁵⁷ [Treating students fairly: the economics of post-school education](#) (House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee, 2018).

The delivery of high-quality provision

81. High-quality and high-value provision are key to these reforms. We need a regulatory system that is fully equipped to support radically different, flexible arrangements, measuring quality using metrics that are meaningful in the new system. We will work with the Office for Students as it develops its new approach to quality in the regulatory framework, in alignment with the measures outlined in this paper. We are determined to avoid the development of thousands of modules of low-quality provision competing with the high-quality options outlined elsewhere in this White Paper. We will work towards a well-integrated and aligned higher education and further education system, with the flexibility that enables students to move between settings to suit their needs.

82. To enable greater flexibility, we must ensure that high-quality provision is normally credit-bearing thereby enabling learners to accumulate and transfer credit where appropriate between institutions and to build up to meaningful qualifications over time fitting in with their personal and work circumstances. Currently there is no systematic and widely used way for building up credit across different institutions.⁵⁸ This poses a key barrier for flexible lifelong learning. We will take action to incentivise easier and more frequent credit transfer between institutions.

83. For the Lifelong Loan Entitlement to be a success it is crucial that the user is at the heart of these reforms. Creating a more efficient and user-friendly system, meeting the needs of individuals, employers and the economy will require new legislation to move away from a system grounded in the concept of full years or courses of study. It will also require significant changes to Student Loans Company (SLC) systems.

Consulting on the changes

84. The Lifelong Loan Entitlement will be a radical change and we will listen to the views of providers, employers and individuals. We will consult on the scope and detail of the entitlement in early 2021, including seeking views on objectives and coverage, together with aspects such as the level of modularity (i.e. the minimum number of credits a course will need to bear), how to incentivise and enable effective credit transfer, and whether Equivalent and Lower Qualifications (ELQ) restrictions should be amended to facilitate retraining and stimulate provision.

⁵⁸ [Student transfers: experimental statistics on students changing course from 2012-12 to 2017-18](#) (Office for Students 2020).

Short term progress towards the Lifelong Loan Entitlement

85. The needs of the economy are changing right now, so progress is needed at speed. We want providers to change their offers now, and for learners to start having the opportunities they need and deserve. The Lifelong Loan Entitlement will be introduced from 2025, but over the coming years we will take steps to support its full delivery. We want to deliver tangible changes to how people experience the system on the ground as well as stimulating provision and demand that will drive the behaviour change needed to deliver our ambition for the Lifelong Loan Entitlement.

86. We will stimulate the delivery of high-quality higher technical (levels 4 and 5) provision in further education colleges, universities and Independent Training Providers and set the conditions to incentivise more flexibility.⁵⁹ This will include piloting modular provision and upgrading SLC systems to provide a more efficient and user-friendly service. By doing this, we will ensure that all students, regardless of where they study, get a similar experience both in terms of access to funding and learning.

87. As part of streamlining our processes, we want to hear from institutions which are currently in receipt of both student finance and Advanced Learner Loans to understand what needs to be improved in order to best support modular provision.

88. Currently, access to higher education student finance (such as that available for an undergraduate degree), including maintenance loans, is based on whether a qualification is 'prescribed'. 'Non-prescribed' courses only have access to Advanced Learner Loans with a limited maintenance bursary. This uneven funding system is based on institutional regulation rather than on the quality of the course.

89. We will examine the fee limits that apply to different qualifications at higher levels to ensure value for money for the learner and the taxpayer, including looking to reduce funding for non-approved higher technical qualifications from 2023.

⁵⁹ Designated Institutions and other providers that deliver higher technical education will be included.

90. We view the delivery of Higher Technical Qualifications that meet new national employer-led standards as a crucial step towards making sure the Lifelong Loan Entitlement can deliver better outcomes for learners. There need to be high-quality alternatives that learners and employers value, and which fit with our long-term commitment to a simplified, unified student finance system. Approved Higher Technical Qualifications will therefore need to be eligible for that funding system, accessible and flexible. As such, we will explore options to reduce barriers and support learners who need to fit study around a busy life and those who want to access higher technical education to upskill or retrain at any point in their careers. This flexibility will need to be replicated across the entire further and higher education system.

91. We will make funding available next year to kickstart this expansion of higher technical education. While it is our intention that the Lifelong Loan Entitlement will ultimately be the primary route of funding for advanced technical and degree levels (levels 4-6), including modular provision, in 2021/22 we intend to fund trials of modular high-quality technical provision. This will stimulate demand and supply and improve our understanding of 'what works' in delivering effective modular provision ahead of the introduction of the Lifelong Loan Entitlement. We will also support providers to build capacity and grow their technical provision

92. We will continue to look at what other short-term changes could be helpful to ensure that we are continuously building towards the Lifelong Loan Entitlement, ensuring that we take advantage of any available opportunities to test and learn prior to its introduction. We will also provide the SLC with capital funding for systems upgrades and will immediately start work with them to scope and design the necessary system changes.

Supporting digital and remote learning

93. In addition to improving access to finance and creating more modular provision, we also need to increase flexibility through the way learning happens. We want to build on the online learning delivered by the further education sector during the coronavirus pandemic. Providers have reported that, for some groups of students, online and blended learning has improved engagement. We will ensure that adult education budget funding rules continue to allow a mix of face-to-face learning and online education to support providers to capitalise on the potential of digital learning.

94. In addition, we will learn from the digital teaching and learning resources created through the College Collaboration Fund during the coronavirus pandemic and continue to invest in development of quality-assured digital resources from entry to higher technical levels. We will work with the sector on how quality-assured digital resources are best shared to deliver a coordinated and scalable approach to digital delivery across the further education sector and support further education providers to share, tailor, and integrate resources without reinventing them.

Cheryl aged 54, “I have had a change of circumstance and need to train to find a job. What are my options?”

“Hi I’m Cheryl, I have recently moved to a new area and I’m struggling to find work. I need help with updating my CV and I also want to discuss how I could develop my skills. I had thought about attending college to improve my IT skills, but I’m unsure how to do this and where to get advice.”

In our reformed system this is how Cheryl’s journey might look:

Cheryl’s job centre work coach suggests that a digital bootcamp in her local area would be a great opportunity for her to upskill. The coach helps her to enrol on a 12-week programme on software development. Cheryl is reassured that the course would be recognised by employers and there was a fast-track to an interview at the end of it.

The flexibility of both online and classroom-based learning helps her complete the training around her caring responsibilities. Cheryl has an interview with a local technology firm and is successful in gaining a permanent job with them.

Clear and trusted information, advice and guidance for careers and education choices

95. Clear and outcomes-focused careers information is fundamental to the success of our reforms. We need impartial, lifelong careers advice and guidance available to people when they need it, regardless of age, circumstance, or background.

96. At the moment, there is no single place you can go to get government-backed, comprehensive careers information. This can make the careers landscape confusing, fragmented, and unclear.⁶⁰ Young people tend to get advice from their family and friends, which is often outdated and varies greatly according to their socio-economic background.⁶¹ Parents and carers are less confident in advising their children about non-academic qualifications, such as apprenticeships (28%) and other technical education choices (21%), compared to A Level subject choice (50%).⁶²

97. We 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 revamped website will bring together all the learning and careers routes available to people, along with improved content on work experience, applying for roles, and updated labour market information. It will offer personalisation, with content recommendations for individual users, access to local and regional careers information and advice for specific groups like parents, students and the unemployed. The Careers & Enterprise Company will encourage use of the site as part of careers education in schools and colleges. We will introduce interactive careers maps, which will show the occupations and career options that technical or higher technical education can open the door to.

98. We will improve both local and national alignment between The Careers & Enterprise Company and the National Careers Service to create a clear, all-age careers system. We have appointed Professor Sir John Holman to advise on this alignment, as Independent Strategic Adviser on Careers Guidance, working closely with The Careers & Enterprise Company and the National Careers Service. We have developed four principles for increasing alignment which we will implement over the next 18 months as we work towards a longer-term review of the delivery system.

99. Data is vital in careers information and guidance. We will improve the data available for people when considering different routes. We will start by making wage returns data available for apprenticeships, as recommended by the Augar Report.⁶³ This will mean that people are informed of the value of their apprenticeship.

⁶⁰ [Moments of choice: how education outcomes data can support better informed career decisions](#), (The Careers & Enterprise Company, 2016), p.4.

⁶¹ [Omnibus survey of pupils and their parent/carers: research report wave 4](#) (Department for Education, 2018), pp.173-177, 184 & 212.

⁶² [Omnibus survey of pupils and their parent/carers: research report wave 4](#) (Department for Education, 2018), p.178.

⁶³ [Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding](#) (2019), recommendation 5.2, p.149.

Improving the delivery of careers advice in schools and colleges

100. Over 80% of schools and colleges are now using the Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance to develop and improve their careers programmes, resulting in improvements in every dimension of careers support.⁶⁴

101. We will continue with the rollout of the careers infrastructure as recommended by the Augar Report.⁶⁵ We will continue to extend coverage of Careers Hubs to local communities across England, supporting more schools and colleges to deliver world-class careers education in their area. Through the Enterprise Adviser Network, we will continue to connect senior business volunteers with secondary schools and colleges, including special schools and alternative provision. The providers will benefit from 1:1 support, including advice on how to make connections with employers and develop a careers programme that will deliver the Gatsby Benchmarks. We will invest in more high-quality training for Careers Leaders, who have proven to be knowledgeable and effective in leading a careers programme.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ The Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance are a blueprint of what good careers provision looks like. The eight benchmarks are based on national and international research and describe all the elements of an excellent careers programme. [Careers Education in England's schools and colleges 2020](#) (The Careers & Enterprise Company, 2020).

⁶⁵ [Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding](#) (2019), recommendation 2.11, pp.55-56.

⁶⁶ [Evaluation of the Careers Leader training](#) (The Institute for Employment Studies, 2019).

102. Students need information about apprenticeships. Currently, only 4% of young people start an apprenticeship after their GCSEs, and in Years 9 and 10 far fewer pupils had been spoken to about technical choices in comparison to academic routes.⁶⁷ We commenced the 'Baker Clause' in 2018 to address this.⁶⁸⁶⁹ It requires schools to provide opportunities for every pupil, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, to meet apprenticeship providers and learn about technical education options. We 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; and government-funded careers support for schools to be made conditional on Baker Clause compliance. Alongside this, we 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.⁷⁰ We will publish updated guidance setting out what we expect for secondary schools (as statutory guidance) and colleges (as a requirement for funding). We will ask Ofsted to undertake a thematic review to provide an up-to-date assessment of careers guidance in schools and colleges and provide recommendations to improve practice.

103. We want careers education and guidance to be embedded in the life of every school and college. To cement this, we will work with the education sector and business to develop a shared approach to careers education that will support young people to understand the modern workplace and develop the career management skills and attributes they need to compete in today's labour market. We will equip the teaching profession to support a whole-school or college approach to careers education by building careers awareness into every stage of their professional development, from initial training to education leadership.

⁶⁷ [Youth Voice Census Report 2019](#) (Youth Employment UK, 2019).

⁶⁸ [Key stage 4 destination measures, Academic Year 2018/2019](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

⁶⁹ The 'Baker Clause', [Section 42B of the Education Act 1997](#), (inserted by section 2 of the Technical and Further Education Act 2017, commenced on 2 January 2018).

⁷⁰ [Section 42A of the Education Act 1997](#) requires governing bodies to ensure that all registered pupils at the school are provided with independent careers guidance from year 8 to year 13.

Chapter 4: Responsive providers, supported by more effective accountability and funding

We will reform our funding and accountability systems to better support providers in their role, simplifying funding streams and giving providers more autonomy, but holding them to account for the outcomes they deliver. We will develop proposals for consultation in spring 2021 which will set out how we will:

- Simplify and streamline funding for further education to support high-value provision relevant to the labour market.
- Give more certainty to providers over their funding, including considering how we could move to a multi-year funding regime which is more forward-looking.
- Reform our accountability approach, relaxing ringfences and reporting; instead focusing on the outcomes that colleges are delivering to improve progression and respond to employer demand.
- Introduce new accountability structures to underpin delivery of Local Skills Improvement Plans.

Alongside this consultation, we will:

- Introduce new powers for the Secretary of State for Education, so the government can intervene quickly and decisively in cases where there are persistent problems that cannot otherwise be addressed, either where colleges are not delivering effectively, or where local providers are consistently unable to deliver the skills priorities for that area.
- Strengthen the governance of colleges, by taking a clearer position on what good governance and leadership looks like and placing specific requirements on colleges and other provider types.
- Continue to invest in the college estate, to transform facilities and enable high-quality provision.
- Ensure that subcontracting practices improve educational outcomes, by encouraging higher-quality partnership arrangements between lead providers and their partners.

104. As set out in the Augar Report, colleges are at the heart of their local communities and economies. They make high-quality education and training available to young people and adults, provide skills and training for local employers, and offer invaluable social and emotional support to their students.⁷¹ They play an important role in ensuring education is accessible to all, including those with additional needs or disabilities. Their response to the pandemic also demonstrated the role colleges and local adult education services have at the core of their communities, with exceptional examples across the sector including in producing and dispensing Personal Protective Equipment and supporting the delivery of local services.

105. However, collectively, the existing pattern of provision does not fully meet the skills needed by the labour market, with employer reported skill-shortage vacancies comprising nearly a quarter of all vacancies.⁷² Colleges do not have a definitive articulation of these needs.⁷³ Furthermore, the funding system does not adequately take into account cases where there is provision which employers require, and which has higher earning outcomes, such as engineering, but is expensive to deliver.⁷⁴

106. The adult funding system is particularly complex and has evolved over the years, so it is often unclear in terms of scope, approach, or delivery. Funding flows and eligibility rules are complicated, leading to a focus on processes, rather than outcomes.⁷⁵ The allocation of overall budgets a year at a time also makes it difficult for colleges to plan provision strategically.⁷⁶ The National Audit Office noted that the complexity around the funding regime and patterns of payment led to additional burdens for providers and contributed towards financial pressures and managing their budgets with more certainty.⁷⁷ As noted by the Augar Report, providers are under pressure to fill courses early, leaving little opportunity for long-term planning.⁷⁸

⁷¹ [Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding](#) (2019) pp.117-118.

⁷² [Employer Skills Survey 2019: Research report](#), (Department for Education, 2020) p.25.

⁷³ See for example [England's Skills Puzzle: Piecing Together Further Education Training & Employment](#) (Policy Connect Learning & Work Institute, 2020).

⁷⁴ 16-19 [Funding Formula Programme Cost Weightings Review](#) (Department for Education, 2013).

⁷⁵ [Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding](#) (2019), p.125.

⁷⁶ [Independent review of college financial oversight](#) (Dame Mary Ney, 2019), pp.11-12.

⁷⁷ [Financial sustainability of colleges in England](#) (National Audit Office, 2020).

⁷⁸ [Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding](#) (2019), p.126.

107. Historic under-investment in the further education estate also needs to be addressed to allow providers to meet the skills needs of employers.⁷⁹ Capital funding for colleges to date has failed to deliver the investment needed to maintain existing provision, let alone provide the world-class technical facilities that our country needs. This leads to several problems, from basic health and safety concerns to colleges not always having the industry-standard equipment they need.⁸⁰ The expected demographic increase in the number of young people in further education will also affect the capacity of colleges – the Office for National Statistics predicts that the number of 16-18-year-olds will increase by around 20% between 2020 and 2030.⁸¹

108. In this White Paper we set out a clear priority for further education providers: to give people the advanced technical and higher technical skills they need to get good jobs, which will boost the nation’s productivity and support progression. Colleges will have a clear strategic role in delivering this objective, as they are at the core of their local communities and economies. We will ask them to ensure their mission statements centre on this core purpose, whilst they continue to help support learners with wider or additional educational needs. We will create a funding and accountability environment that supports this objective.

A new model of autonomous and accountable providers meeting local and national skills needs

109. We want to create a system that gives providers autonomy and flexibility to adapt, while ensuring they deliver good outcomes for learners, employers, and the taxpayer. This means moving away from complex funding rules, ringfences, and reporting which place unnecessary burdens on providers. We want to trust good providers to spend their money on provision that best meets national and local economic need and hold them to account for the outcomes they deliver.

⁷⁹ [Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding](#) (2019), p128; [AoC 2018 report on college finances](#) (Association of Colleges, 2018), p23.

⁸⁰ [Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding](#) (2019), p.128.

⁸¹ [National population projections 2018-based: principal population projection by single year of age 0 to 125](#), (Office for National Statistics, 2020).

110. To lay on provision that meets the skills needs of the local area, providers need to have a clear articulation of those needs. Many providers do this well independently, striking up strong partnerships with local employers to improve and deliver provision; but some do not. Local Skills Improvement Plans (covered in more detail in Chapter 1) will provide a clear, credible, and evidence-based assessment of local priority skills needs, enabling colleges and other providers to design formal qualifications and more flexible skills provision appropriately. While providers will retain their individual responsibility for skills provision, Local Skills Improvement Plans will bring colleges and other providers together to agree how gaps can best be filled, and our Strategic Development Funding will be able to support colleges with this change. In this way, taxpayer and employer investment in skills can be directed more effectively, giving a better offer to individuals and better outcomes for the economy.

111. We will support providers by changing the way we engage with them. We will ensure that they have more autonomy to use funding how they see fit in order to meet the needs of learners and the skills needs of local employers, including those articulated in Local Skills Improvement Plans. In return, we will reform the accountability system to focus less on process and more on the effectiveness of provider performance and the outcomes they achieve. We will consult on how we can best assess the performance of providers, building on the new progression performance metrics being introduced and considering effectiveness of employer engagement, quality of provision and the outcomes achieved, such as how well provision supports individuals to progress in their learning and secure good labour market outcomes.

112. By taking an outcome-focused approach, providers will be incentivised to review their provision to ensure it leads to meaningful employment for their learners, scaling back where there is an oversupply of provision and expanding other areas in line with agreed Local Skills Improvement Plans priorities.

113. We will also seek to develop an accountability structure for local areas, setting out what is expected of every actor in the system so local skills priorities can be delivered and to ensure that providers are contributing to actions they have agreed in the new Local Skills Improvement Plans.

Simplified and better targeted funding

114. We want to create a simpler funding system that:

- Gives individuals access to high-quality education and training throughout their lives, so they can gain the skills to progress in sustainable and productive employment.

- Ensures providers receive coherent and transparent funding which supports sustainable, high-quality provision.
- Enables the delivery of the skills our economy needs at both national and local level, providing value for money for the taxpayer and levelling up across the country.

115. Government investment in further education covers a broad range of provision: universal provision for 16-to-19-year olds; access to higher level technical provision through loan support; and training and education to enable adults to reskill and upskill at all levels throughout their lives. Funding flows in adult education in particular have become more complex and need simplifying.⁸² We will establish a new funding landscape that clearly describes the role of central government, Mayoral Combined Authorities and further education providers, ensuring funding is allocated effectively. We will also consider the role of provider sub-contracting.

116. In addition to the funding described above, the Government will ensure support continues to be made available for those young people and adults furthest from entering learning or the labour market.⁸³ The UK Shared Prosperity Fund Employment and Skills Programme will provide crucial ‘first step’ provision for some of the most vulnerable in society. It will offer bespoke, locally targeted employment, social inclusion, and skills provision to help those furthest from learning and the labour market move closer towards, enter into, and progress in education and work. We will align this fund with our overall vision for skills, making sure its primary objective is to help individuals get the support they need to get great jobs and progress in their careers and that the delivery mechanism supports our locally led approach to skills provision.

⁸² [Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding](#) (2019), p.125.

⁸³ [Young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\), UK: February 2020](#) (Office for National Statistics, 2020).

Consulting on funding and accountability

117. Our consultation will explore how funding can be allocated in a simpler way, so providers receive a clear and certain funding allocation for the forthcoming year and have full autonomy on how they use that funding to deliver outcomes. It will also explore the way in which providers should be held accountable for the outcomes achieved with that funding to ensure value for money for the taxpayer, while maintaining autonomy and reducing administrative burdens.

118. We will explore how funding can support the growth of high-value provision, recognising that high-value courses often cost more to deliver, and that completing full qualifications is not the only route to effective upskilling.⁸⁴ We will work with Mayoral Combined Authorities to review how funding for local areas is allocated, exploring moving to a needs-based approach rather than allocations based on historical performance.

119. Local Skills Improvement Plans will enable a more strategic approach to further education provision, and it is vital that colleges have confidence to develop their response over a longer timeframe than the current funding system allows. We will explore how we could bring in a multi-year funding regime to help provide this confidence, subject to the government Spending Review cycle, and how we can best balance predictability of budgets with responsiveness towards changing needs.

120. We will develop proposals working with the sector, testing elements such as how ringfences can be removed with a small number of colleges, prior to setting out proposals in a full consultation in spring 2021.

More effective support and intervention

121. To support our reforms, we will move to a more strategic relationship with colleges as recommended in the Ney Review.⁸⁵ We will develop a clearer line of sight with all colleges, so they can showcase their achievements as well as have the confidence to ask for help at an early stage if it is needed.⁸⁶ From next year, all colleges will have an annual strategic conversation which will provide an opportunity for their leaders to set out strategic objectives, risks, and opportunities, showcase good practice, and discuss plans with government.

⁸⁴ [16 to 19 Funding Formula Programme Cost Weightings Review Research Report](#) (Department for Education, 2013).

⁸⁵ [Independent review of college financial oversight](#) (Dame Mary Ney, 2019).

⁸⁶ [Independent review of college financial oversight](#) (Dame Mary Ney, 2019), p.28.

122. Ofsted’s published grades data shows that, of 147 further education colleges and 49 sixth form colleges with inspection ratings, 75% of further education colleges and 88% of sixth form colleges have an overall effectiveness judgement of ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’.⁸⁷ For the much smaller proportion of colleges where intervention is necessary due to performance or financial issues, we will put in place a shorter timeframe for intervention. This will be focused on the most important strategic issues, followed by a longer period of active support post-intervention to ensure any agreed changes are delivered effectively. This is what colleges tell us they need; it responds to the recommendations in the recent National Audit Office report of college financial sustainability and will improve the speed and effectiveness of support.⁸⁸

123. We will seek to strengthen powers for the Secretary of State for Education to intervene locally to close or set up college corporations, bring about changes to membership or composition of governing bodies or review leadership, or take other actions where there are long term weaknesses. This includes the possibility of intervention within a local area, where there is evidence of issues affecting a limited number of providers. Use of these powers is envisaged only as a last resort, where agreement has not been possible through other means and there are no alternative options for resolution.

Strengthened governance for colleges⁸⁹

124. Excellent college governors and leaders are pivotal to delivering high-quality provision and enabling their workforce and learners to succeed. The most effective colleges already have high-quality governance in place and have become role models through programmes like the National Leaders of Governance.

⁸⁷ [Further education and skills inspections and outcomes as at 31 August 2020](#) (Ofsted, 2020), Table D3: Most recent full inspection outcomes. Note: 22 FE colleges & sixth form colleges do not have Ofsted ratings.

⁸⁸ [Financial sustainability of colleges in England](#) (National Audit Office, 2020).

⁸⁹ Further Education Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges, and Designated Institutions.

125. We will work with the Association of Colleges, the Sixth Form College Association, National Leaders of Governance, and other sector leads to level up standards of governance. This includes setting out clearer expectations, requirements, and support to empower weaker colleges to address problems earlier, as well as ensuring that college corporations can govern effectively and autonomously. This will build on the Ney Review recommendation to create effective mechanisms for post-16 planning in local areas, and higher expectations of governance through clearer requirements, reviews, and training.⁹⁰

126. We will deliver a series of reforms that will enable college corporation boards to deliver more effective recruitment into college leadership teams, and stronger overall governance of college finances and strategic investment to meet local skills needs. We will:

- Set out clear expectations for college corporation boards on recruitment, retention and development of principals and board members, to ensure they have the skills they need.
- Refresh existing guidance on appointments, communicating a clear Government position on what constitutes good leadership, and make it clear that an independent person should be included on college leader interview panels to ensure objectivity and due diligence.
- Work with the sector to develop a framework of skills and competencies to improve development for college corporation board members and governance professionals once in post.
- Set new requirements for annual board self-assessment and regular external governance reviews.
- Work with the Charity Commission to review how the existing system operates for paying board chairs, to consider the possibilities for enabling board chairs to be paid in specific circumstances within the confines of charity law.

⁹⁰ [Independent review of college financial oversight](#) (Dame Mary Ney, 2019).

127. In addition, we will provide more support for college corporation boards to develop their capacity and build a diverse membership that better reflects their local areas. This includes strengthening our board recruitment guidance to set clear expectations on the skills and experience needed for effective governance, such as financial and budget management expertise, post-16 education experience, and business and estates management skills. Learning from best practice in the most effective college corporations, we will also work with the sector to identify ways in which industry professionals and others with these skills and experience can be encouraged to join college boards. This will include identifying groups currently under-represented on college boards, including people with disabilities, and people from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds. Those from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds made up only 4% of college leaders in 2018.⁹¹

128. We will also work with the sector to establish strong expectations that college leaders and corporation board members undergo suitable training, and that those with high potential are supported to progress through an end-to-end development programme for further education leadership and governance, building on the existing Education and Training Foundation offer. There are already high-performing, experienced college leaders who are supporting others through the National Leaders of Further Education programme.⁹² We are also already investing £4.5 million to develop a clear pathway of programmes to enable progress to leadership positions in the sector, ensuring that at every stage, leaders have the right training and support.⁹³ Collaboration will also be critical to driving improvement, building on the work of the College Collaboration Fund.

⁹¹ [College staff survey: 2018](#) (Department for Education, 2018). Note: in the survey leaders includes governors, members of the Senior Management Team including vice-principals, directors and CEOs, middle and junior managers, and staff-governors.

⁹² [National Leaders of Further Education programme: current national leaders](#) (Education & Skills Funding Agency, Further Education Commissioner, 2020).

⁹³ This investment includes the Strategic Leadership Programme, the CFO Programme, Aspiring Principals Programme and the Middle Leaders Programme, overseen by the Education and Training Foundation and delivered by Oxford Saïd Business School, the Institute of Chartered Accountants and other partners.

The role of Independent Training Providers in the new system

129. We will continue to recognise the unique knowledge and capacity that Independent Training Providers bring. They are the largest provider type delivering apprenticeships and they contribute substantially to adult education and training.^{94 95} That is why we will encourage them to engage with the development and delivery of Local Skills Improvement Plans, so they can play their part in responding to the skills gaps that the plans identify. We will use competitive measures to source training providers where the existing provider base is unable to respond to the gaps identified through the Local Skills Improvement Plans to meet the needs of learners and employers.

130. We also want to raise standards in Independent Training Providers, as we are doing in colleges, so every young person and adult receives consistently high-quality provision. There are around 1,250 Independent Training Providers delivering funded provision in England and while some providers are excellent, this crowded landscape does not always deliver high-quality provision.⁹⁶ Almost half (47%) of learners at Independent Training Providers had below average rates of progression to employment or further training when compared to similar learners studying similar courses in other provider types; in further education colleges, 35% had below average progression.⁹⁷ Further, we know that the short notice exit of an Independent Training Provider from the market can significantly disrupt the education and training of many young people and adults.⁹⁸

131. We will therefore take a stronger role in ensuring that Independent Training Providers are meeting skills needs. We will also continue to address areas that are not performing well by raising the bar on quality and stopping poor-quality or financially inadequate Independent Training Providers from delivering provision. Options include terminating their contracts and removing them from the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers as appropriate.

Clamping down on harmful subcontracting practices

We will implement the Government consultation response, 'Reforms to subcontracting education for learners over 16', published in June 2020.⁹⁹

Subcontracting is widespread, and the total value of this provision is £484.5 million which is 10.6% of total post-16 funding.¹⁰⁰ Subcontracting can plug gaps in niche or expert provision, provide access to better facilities, widen geographical access, and specifically benefit disadvantaged young people and adults. However, there are instances of poor practice and insufficient oversight which can lead to misuse of funding, subcontracting to generate income for the lead provider, and fraud.¹⁰¹

We are already taking decisive action to stop harmful subcontracting practices, and to reduce the volume of subcontracting significantly.¹⁰² We will:

- Require lead providers to publish clear educational rationale for their subcontracting position, alongside their management fee structure and a list of all subcontracting partners. This will need to be reviewed annually and signed off by those charged with governance.
- Introduce a standard for the management of subcontracting, backed up with government intervention if this is not met.
- Require providers to produce timely and accurate data on their subcontracting arrangements, informing the Department for Education of any changes.

This will encourage strong partnership working, which is important in creating a strong leading role for colleges and will address poorly managed subcontracted provision.

⁹⁴ [Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#) (Department for Education, updated 2020).

⁹⁵ [Funding allocations to training providers: 2019 to 2020](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

⁹⁶ [Further education and skills inspections and outcomes as at 31 August 2020](#) (Ofsted, 2020), Table D3: Most recent full inspection outcomes.

⁹⁷ For example, comparing progression for benefit learners studying at level 2 in Independent Training Providers to all other benefit learners studying at level 2. [Further education: outcome-based success measures: academic year 2017/18](#). (Department for Education, 2020).

⁹⁸ For example, [The monitoring, inspection and funding of Learndirect Ltd.](#) (Public Accounts Committee, 2018).

⁹⁹ [Reforms to subcontracting education for learners over 16. Government consultation response](#) (Education & Skills Funding Agency, 2020).

¹⁰⁰ [Reforms to subcontracting education for learners over 16. Government consultation response](#) (Education Funding Agency, 2020), p.3; [List of declared subcontractors](#) (Education and Skills Funding Agency, updated 2020).

¹⁰¹ [Reforms to subcontracting education for learners over 16. Government consultation response](#) (Education & Skills Funding Agency, 2020), p.4; [Subcontracting in further education and skills](#) (Ofsted, 2020).

Capital funding to transform the college estate and enable high-quality provision

132. Colleges need the right facilities to deliver high-value education and training and meet the skills needs of their local area. The Government has already begun its investment in upgrading the condition of the further education college estate with a capital investment of £200 million in 2020-21.¹⁰³ This forms part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee and will support immediate remedial projects to upgrade the condition of the estate. Further investment of £1.3 billion will be made over the coming five years through the Further Education Capital Transformation Programme.

133. £268 million of capital funding has been allocated to support T Level providers delivering the first three waves of the programme in financial years 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22.¹⁰⁴ This funding will help to ensure that T Level students are able to learn in the most up-to-date facilities and using the most up-to-date equipment. This will help them move successfully into employment or on to further technical education.

134. We are about to see a sharp increase in the number of 16-19-year-olds in our population and, through our reforms, we want to see many more of them choosing technical education courses than before.¹⁰⁵ From April 2021 we will target funding for capital projects to provide extra space to those further education colleges and sixth form colleges that can demonstrate an urgent need for increased capacity in the academic year 2022-2023, with £83 million available in the financial year 2021/22.

135. Ahead of the next Spending Review, we will engage with the sector to respond to this projected increase in demand for future years, so young people and adults can access the high-quality provision they and the economy need, wherever they are in the country.

¹⁰³ Designated Institutions are also covered in capital investment.

¹⁰⁴ Funding beyond 2021-22 will be formalised in future spending reviews.

¹⁰⁵ [National population projections 2018-based: principal population projection by single year of age 0 to 125](#), (Office for National Statistics, 2020).

Chapter 5: Supporting outstanding teaching

We will work with the sector to ensure that providers can recruit, retain, and develop the teaching staff they need to deliver the best possible education to young people and adults. This will be underpinned by significant new investment in 2021/22, taking total spending on the further education workforce to over £65 million. We will:

- 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.
- Support the reform of initial teacher education so it is based on employer-led standards, is driven by quality, and offers attractive and accessible training routes, underpinned by financial incentives for trainees in priority areas.
- Drive the provision of high-quality professional development to improve the quality of teaching and support progression for teaching staff.
- 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.
- Support apprenticeships teachers and lecturers with a tailored professional development offer.
- Introduce comprehensive workforce data collection.

136. To transform technical education, we must recruit and retain excellent teaching staff, and we must make sure they have access to high-quality training and professional development. There should be clear routes for industry professionals to move into teaching, and for existing staff to access secondments in industry so that the latest expertise informs high-quality teaching.

137. There are tens of thousands of dedicated teaching staff working in further education, but the sector experiences significant difficulties in recruiting and retaining high-quality staff, especially in priority subject areas.¹⁰⁶ Providers tell us they are not always confident that newly trained staff will have reached a consistent standard following their initial teacher education. And teachers and lecturers are not always able to access the high-quality professional development opportunities they need to improve their practice and support progression in their careers.¹⁰⁷ This has significant implications for the quality and retention of teaching staff in further education: 52% of those who left the sector said that more training and opportunities would have made them less likely to leave.¹⁰⁸ We will improve the initial training and professional development offers for further education teachers and lecturers.

138. We also need to improve recruitment and retention. More than half of principals say they find recruitment difficult.¹⁰⁹ In 2018, teaching vacancy rates in crucial subject areas such as engineering and construction were as high as 5%.¹¹⁰ We need more teaching staff with the necessary experience of relevant industries to be able to deliver high-quality teaching based on cutting-edge skills and knowledge. We will also work to build a diverse workforce that reflects the diversity of those who study further education. Only 6% of further education teachers and lecturers are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds; we will look to understand why this is the case and develop strategies to address this issue.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ The College Staff Survey 2018 showed vacancy rates of 1-5%, highest for Engineering, Construction and Digital/IT. [College staff survey: 2018](#) (Department for Education, 2018).

¹⁰⁷ [College Staff Survey 2019 follow-up](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

¹⁰⁸ [College Staff Survey 2019 follow-up](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

¹⁰⁹ [College staff survey: 2018](#) (Department for Education, 2018).

¹¹⁰ [College staff survey: 2018](#) (Department for Education, 2018).

¹¹¹ [College staff survey: 2018](#) (Department for Education, 2018).

An ambitious recruitment strategy with a national campaign and one-stop information platform

139. We will invest in attracting high-calibre teaching staff, recognising the need to build the prestige and profile of the profession. Teaching in further education is often overlooked as a career, with information for potential recruits being inadequate and disparate.¹¹² We intend to change this through an ambitious government recruitment campaign with clear information and comprehensive support for prospective teachers and lecturers.

140. A national recruitment campaign, expected to be launched in 2021, would reach millions of prospective teaching staff, targeting those with experience and skills in industry, who can train the next generation of technical experts. It would highlight the real opportunity to shape students' lives, as those working in further education do every day.

141. Our recruitment campaign would direct potential teachers to the new 'Teach in Further Education' platform. Alongside a dedicated telephone helpline, the platform will give potential applicants all they need to take the next step into teaching, with information on how to access relevant training, for example the Taking Teaching Further programme, and financial incentives such as training bursaries. It will also signpost current vacancies, and help existing teachers and lecturers find professional development opportunities.

142. We want as many talented individuals as possible to teach in further education settings. We will develop innovative schemes that give people teaching experience – such as the Education and Training Foundation's Talent to Teach programme, which offers a 'taster' of further education teaching to university students and recent graduates.

¹¹²[What needs to be done to promote teaching in further education as an attractive career option to top graduates and well-qualified industry professionals?](#) (Institute for Learning, 2014).

Effective initial teacher education

143. We need a consistently high-quality initial teacher education offer in further education. There is some outstanding initial teacher education in parts of the further education sector, based on clear quality standards and supporting well-structured career development opportunities.¹¹³ However, in our engagement with a range of initial teacher education providers and further education providers we have been told that practice across the system is not uniformly good, and that the initial teacher education offer is too fragmented, difficult to navigate and not always based on sufficiently clear quality standards. Now is the time for government to take a more active role in challenging the status quo and providing better oversight of the initial teacher education system, ensuring that public funding goes only to high-quality provision based on clear employer-led standards.

144. It is vital that further education providers are confident in the quality of initial teacher education. Ofsted has confirmed that its future inspections will now cover all publicly funded further education initial teacher education, not just that validated by universities. This is an important first step in driving up quality and enabling potential staff and employers to identify the best training available.

145. We are improving initial teacher education so that all publicly funded training will be rooted in employer-led standards. A revised employer-led standard for further education teaching is currently being developed by a group of sector employers, and we anticipate a clear benchmark for teaching quality will be set by September 2021. Based on this new standard, we will support the redevelopment of further education initial teacher education qualifications, so that they too are based on the same clear set of outcomes.

146. We will work closely with the sector to bring about the improvements to quality that we all agree are so important to improving teaching in further education settings. However, we are clear that substantial change is needed, and we will consider introducing new statutory powers for the Secretary of State to take a more active role in regulating the provision of initial teacher education, if the improvement we need to see is not achieved.

¹¹³ [Initial teacher education \(ITE\) inspections and outcomes: management information](#) (Ofsted, last updated 2020).

A seamless and strong relationship between further education and industry

147. Providers, employers, and learners tell us about inspiring examples of successful collaboration between industry and providers. When businesses and providers come together, businesses can meet their workforce needs, and teaching staff get more up-to-date, real world experience in their sectors, and access to cutting-edge equipment, facilities, and knowledge. Providers also tell us that they know this is the right thing to do, but often lack the resource to do it.¹¹⁴ We will enable providers to collaborate routinely with business to develop their teaching workforce through two flagship programmes – Workforce Industry Exchange and Taking Teaching Further.

148. We will expand Taking Teaching Further, which enables industry experts to move into teaching more easily. The programme has grown rapidly in recent years – starting with 50 places in 2018, increasing to 550 places in 2020.¹¹⁵ Through the programme, providers can recruit individuals with industry experience to retrain as teachers and lecturers. The programme covers the costs of training, including a higher-level (level 5) teaching qualification, reduced classroom time during the first year of teaching, and other support, such as paired teaching and mentoring.

Case Study: Activate Learning

Activate Learning, a group of seven further education colleges in the South East, developed the Thames Valley Talent Transfer Programme with the support of the Taking Teaching Further innovation project. The programme provided teachers with short-term placements in businesses linked to their vocational specialism. This enabled staff to form long-term relationships with industry professionals, develop their expertise, and bring their updated industry knowledge back into the classroom.

17 staff members have spent time out in industry, undertaking placements with Westcoast, Panasonic, Costain, and Galliford Try. Following their placements, staff worked with their employer contact to develop and deliver the curriculum back in college. At Activate Learning's Technology Campus, the team worked with Galliford Try to deliver work experience placements, mock interviews, talks, and site visits.

The short-term impact of this project has been a rapid updating of industry knowledge for many of Activate Learning's teaching staff, which has in turn had a direct impact on the delivery of courses to students. Employers had an opportunity to influence the curriculum to support the development of a talent pipeline. Amanda Cherry, Faculty Manager for Construction at the Technology Campus, who spent time with Galliford Try said of her

¹¹⁴ [Innovation in Further Education Colleges Summer 2020 AoC Survey](#) (Association of Colleges 2020).

¹¹⁵ [Multi-million pound support package to boots the FE workforce](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

experience: 'Staff members were really excited and enthused by the experience. We've really enjoyed working with the company to support the development of our students' employability skills and it's great to see the subject really coming alive for them.'

149. We will introduce a new Workforce Industry Exchange programme, across a wide range of subjects and sectors. This will build the capacity of the further education workforce by supporting providers to engage in a sustainable, two-way exchange with industry, building up long-lasting networks with employers. We will provide a framework of what works, based on the Taking Teaching Further pilots and evidence of what has worked elsewhere, while also maintaining flexibility so that providers and employers can innovate and activities can be tailored to local need. We already know that secondments into industry for teaching staff to gain up-to-date industry expertise, and employer secondments to providers where they can deliver master classes and provide curriculum support, are particularly effective.

Continuing professional development for teachers, to uphold quality and enable progression

150. To deliver high-quality teaching, professional development must continue throughout an individual's career. There is more to be done to ensure those working in further education settings have access to high-quality development opportunities. 59% of teaching staff report that they are not satisfied with opportunities to develop in their career¹¹⁶; the Augar Report recognised this and recommended improving the professional development of the further education workforce.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ [College staff survey: 2018](#) (Department for Education, 2018).

¹¹⁷ [Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding](#) (2019), p.136.

151. This Government will now take a more active role to support the sector in meeting this ambition. We will improve digital skills by enabling increased support for online and blended teaching. We will drive improvement in the quality of CPD, recognising that, to bring about real change, there must be sustained high-quality professional development opportunities, based on evidence, led by experts, and underpinned by peer support.¹¹⁸ We will provide effective support to new teachers moving into the sector by continuing to enable access to mentoring. We will assess workforce development needs that arise from Government priorities and support the provision of training which helps deliver those priorities. To encourage the retention of new teachers, we will improve our package of early career support.

152. In addition to this activity, we will continue to push forward with our existing programmes that align to the priority areas above:

- We will continue the T Level Professional Development offer for at least a year beyond March 2021. This will ensure that staff have the up-to-date knowledge and skills to deliver the rollout of 21 further T Level courses between September 2021 and September 2023. The project began in 2019 and almost 7,000 members of staff in further education providers have already participated in the offer. Training is provided for all staff involved in the delivery of T Levels, and the offer includes specific leadership training including curriculum planning and assessment, pedagogical and subject-based training for teaching staff, networking opportunities for all staff involved in T Level delivery, and the opportunity to gain industry insights by spending time with a local employer.
- We will continue to fund schemes that support teachers in schools and colleges to improve their digital delivery skills. We will continue to expand the Demonstrator Programme to provide peer-to-peer support for thousands of schools and colleges, including ways they can support remote education. The College Collaboration Fund will continue developing high-quality digital resources for all levels of provision and we will start work with the sector on how best to share these resources in a scalable and coordinated way.

¹¹⁸ [Developing great teaching: lessons from the international reviews into effective professional development](#) (Teacher Development Trust, 2015).

- We will encourage more organisations with relevant expertise to provide high-quality and evidence-based training and development for teaching staff in the sector. For example, supporting initiatives such as the WorldSkills UK's Centre of Excellence scheme, developed in partnership with NCFE, where providers and teachers will be able to benefit from a skills and knowledge development programme including peer-to-peer learning and technical masterclasses based on international best practice.

A high-quality apprenticeships teaching workforce

153. The apprenticeship teaching workforce plays a crucial role in the delivery of high-quality apprenticeships. All providers should have a high-quality curriculum and training plan underpinned by employer-led standards with continuous investment in CPD so that teachers and lecturers have up-to-date knowledge of their subject. We recognise that the apprenticeship teaching workforce has adapted extremely well to several recent changes. However, more can be done: of the 7% of apprentices reporting dissatisfaction with their apprenticeship, 50% named a lack of support or contact from training providers as a reason; further, of the 9% of apprentices who reported dissatisfaction with their experience of standards in particular, 41% identified the poor quality of training as a key reason.¹¹⁹

154. We will ensure there is a coherent and joined-up accountability system for training providers that sets out clearly what 'good' looks like, with every party committed and clear on their role at the outset, and only allowing high-quality providers to deliver. We will continue to work closely with Ofsted to focus our activity on ensuring that employers and learners can be assured of a high-quality experience. We 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, we will improve our internal risk assessment and quality assurance of existing providers to intervene where we identify non-compliance or quality risks. We 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.

¹¹⁹[Apprenticeships Evaluation 2018-19 – Learners: research report](#) (Department for Education, 2020).

155. 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. Our aim is to achieve a widespread and rapid improvement in apprenticeship teaching capability.

Comprehensive workforce data collection

156. We will introduce comprehensive workforce data collection as recommended in the Augar Report.¹²⁰ This will bring our knowledge of the workforce in further education on a par with that of schools and higher education. We will establish a collection which will be mandatory when academic year 2021/2022 data is collected from further education providers. The workforce collection will include demographic and personal characteristics, such as ethnicity and disability data, which will enable us to plan better and understand the impact of our policies on diversity in further education staffing and leadership. This collection will sit alongside and complement the other collections that the Education and Skills Funding Agency is responsible for, such as submissions of learner data, and the functionality will be co-designed with the sector to offer coherence to those inputting data.

¹²⁰ [Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding \(2019\)](#).

Annex A: Glossary

- **Adult Education Budget (AEB).** The AEB is funding targeted at engaging adults and providing the necessary skills and learning for work, an apprenticeship or other learning. The national AEB is used to support statutory entitlements to full funding for eligible adults (aged 19 and above). The statutory responsibility for certain adult education functions, including for funding the statutory free entitlements has been transferred to certain Mayoral Combined Authorities (and delegated to the Mayor of London) in relation to their areas together with an associated portion of the AEB.
- **Advanced Learner Loan (ALL).** An Advanced Learner Loan helps eligible adults (aged 19 and above) with the costs of a course at a college or training provider in England. Further information can be found on GOV.UK. Qualifications for which an individual can take a loan out are known as “qualifications approved for ALL”. They can be found at: <https://www.qualifications.education.gov.uk/>
- **Advanced Level.** Any qualification at level 3, they include A Levels, the T Level technical qualification, level 3 NVQs, and level 3 National Diplomas. Apprenticeships can also be delivered at advanced level.
- **Advanced Technical Education.** Refers to technical education that is delivered at level 3, this includes level 3 apprenticeships, T Levels, level 3 NVQs, and some Level 3 National Diplomas. This is the same level as A Levels.
- **Apprenticeship.** An apprenticeship is a job that combines practical training with study. These can be provided from intermediate level (level 2) to professional level (levels 6&7). See “A guide to apprenticeships” on GOV.UK for further information.
- **Higher Technical Qualification.** This refers to a level 4-5 Higher Technical Qualification that gains approval from the Institute where its content aligns with the Institute’s employer-led standards.
- **Augar Report.** The Post-18 Review of Education and Funding: Independent Panel Report published on 30 May 2019. It makes recommendations on how government can ensure that the education system in England for those aged 18 years and over is: accessible to all; supported by a funding system that provides value for money and works for students and taxpayers; incentivises choice and competition across the sector; and encourages the development of the skills that we need as a country. See GOV.UK for more information.
- **Awarding organisations.** Refers to individual organisations recognised by Ofqual that design, develop, and certificate qualifications but are not themselves education providers.
- **Blended learning.** Learning that takes place partly in a digital environment and partly in-person.
- **Degree Apprenticeship.** An apprenticeship delivered at level 6 or 7, equivalent to an undergraduate or post-graduate degree.
- **Degree Level.** Any qualification at level 6 or 7. Level 6 includes a full undergraduate degree (may be degree with honours/bachelor’s degree), or a graduate diploma. Level 7 includes a master’s degree, postgraduate diploma, and a level 7 diploma. Apprenticeships can also be delivered at levels 6 and 7.
- **Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).** The ESFA is an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Education. It is responsible for funding education and skills for children, young people and adults. See the ESFA website for more information.

- **Employer-led standards.** Set out the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) required for an occupation. Also known as occupational standards. Employer-led standards enable assessment of whether an individual has achieved the KSBs needed to be competent in an occupation. They are developed by groups of employers and approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. They currently form the basis of the T Level technical qualification and apprenticeships (see also Apprenticeship Standards).
- **European Social Fund (ESF).** The European Social Fund (ESF) Operational Programme is part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme for England in 2014-2020. The Programme's priorities are to increase labour market participation, promote social inclusion and develop the skills of the potential and existing workforce. It contributes to improving youth employment by providing support for young people who are harder to reach, and incorporates the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) money in areas with higher rates of youth unemployment. The UK has now left the European Union and is ending its participation in the European Social Fund at the end of 2023. For more information, please see: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/england-2014-to-2020-europeanstructural-and-investment-funds>
- **Further education college (FEC).** Refers to institutions conducted by further education corporations. Further education colleges offer a variety of courses from entry level through to higher level qualifications.
- **Further Education Provider.** An education or training organisation that is approved to deliver education to students. In this paper 'provider' relates specifically to those that provide further education.
- **Higher level.** Any qualification at levels 4 and 5. Apprenticeships can also be at higher level.
- **Higher technical education (HTE).** Refers to technical education provided at levels 4 and 5.
- **Information, advice and guidance.** Impartial, practical support provided to students enabling them to make suitable educational and employment decisions. This can help minimise potential costs associated with uninformed and unsuccessful choices. Information, advice and guidance to support employers in identifying appropriate training that matches their skills needs.
- **Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (Institute).** The Institute is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Education. It approves and publishes the employer-led standards for occupations (and their associated apprenticeship assessment plans), approves technical education qualifications, and advises government on funding for each standard. See the Institute website for more information.
- **Institutes of Technology (IoT).** Collaborations between further education colleges, universities and employers, focused on providing higher-level technical STEM education.
- **Intermediate level.** Any qualification at level 2, including GCSEs (Grades A*-C/9-4), level 2 NVQ. Apprenticeships can also be at intermediate level.
- **Knowledge, skills and behaviours.** These are the outcomes set out in employer-led standards, that demonstrate competence in an occupation. For an approved Higher Technical Qualification, and the T Level qualifications, an individual will

attain as many of the outcomes as may be reasonably expected from a course of education.

- **Level (L).** Refers to the 9 qualification levels in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. See GOV.UK for more information.
- **Level 2.** Also known as Intermediate level. Level 2 qualifications include GCSEs (Grades A*-C/9-4) and level 2 Technical Award. Apprenticeships can also be delivered at Intermediate level.
- **Level 3.** Also known as Advanced level. Level 3 qualifications include A Levels, T Levels, Pearson BTECs, and Cambridge Technicals. Apprenticeships can also be delivered at Advanced level.
- **Levels 4 and 5.** Also known as higher level. Level 4 includes Certificate of higher education, level 4 diploma, and higher national certificate. Level 5 includes, diploma of higher education, foundation degree, higher national diploma. Apprenticeships can also be delivered at higher level.
- **Levels 6 and 7.** Also known as degree level. Level 6 includes a full undergraduate degree (may be degree with honours/bachelor's degree), and a graduate diploma. Level 7 includes a master's degree, postgraduate diploma, and a level 7 diploma. Apprenticeships can also be delivered at degree level.
- **Lifelong Loan Entitlement.** A new transformative funding provision, enabling people to access four years' worth of student loan funding across further and higher education providers throughout their lifetime.
- **Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).** A legal relationship between two or more local authorities by way of partnership or otherwise, created for the purposes of identifying, determining and facilitating economic opportunities that generate economic growth, prosperity and job creation in a particular area.
- **Local Skills Improvement Plans.** Local Skills Improvement Plans will set out the key changes required to skills provision in a local area to make provision more responsive to labour market skills needs.
- **Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA).** A combined authority is a legal structure that may be set up by local authorities in England, with or without a directly elected mayor. Specified adult education statutory functions of the Secretary of State have been transferred to certain MCAs by way of affirmative orders under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. In addition, a delegation of those functions has been made by the Secretary of State in relation to London (which is not a combined authority) under section 39A of the Greater London Authority Act 1999.
- **National Colleges.** National Colleges are institutions, created by employers to support high-level skills training in those sectors that are economically and strategically important to UK growth (i.e. High Speed Rail, Nuclear, Digital, Creative & Cultural). Courses are predominantly between levels 4 to 6, with employers involved in developing the curriculum, and 58 industry professionals teaching the content in simulated workplaces.
- **National Skills Fund.** A £2.5 billion fund to help adults learn valuable skills and prepare for the economy of the future.
- **Ney Review.** The report of Dame Mary Ney's review of financial oversight arrangements for further education and sixth form colleges, with recommendations for improvement, published on 15 July 2020. See GOV.UK for more details.

- **Occupational Standards.** Occupational Standards is a term often used to refer to employer-led standards. They contain a list of the skills, knowledge and behaviours an apprentice will need to have learned by the end of their apprenticeship. Apprenticeships based on employer-led standards have replaced apprenticeship frameworks as part of reforms to raise the quality of apprenticeships. The standards are developed by groups of employers and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education is responsible for approving and publishing the employer-led standards and the related assessment plans. (See also employer-led standards).
- **Office for Students (OfS).** The OfS is a non-departmental public body and is the independent regulator of higher education in England. See OfS website for more information.
- **Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual).** The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) regulates qualifications, examinations, and assessments in England. Ofqual is an independent government department with jurisdiction in England. See the Ofqual website for more information.
- **Post-16 Skills Plan.** The Government's plan to support young people and adults to secure skilled employment and meet the needs of the economy, including through bringing forward technical education reforms based on the work of Lord Sainsbury's independent panel. See GOV.UK for more information.
- **Sainsbury Review.** The review conducted by the Independent Panel on Technical Education, chaired by Lord Sainsbury, which reported its findings in April 2016. The recommendations were accepted in the Post-16 Skills Plan.
- **Skills Advisory Panels (SAP).** Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships have created 36 SAPs which bring together employers, skills providers and local government to resolve mismatches between skills supply and employer demand at a local level.
- **T Level.** A T Level is a rigorous, stretching programme of study at level 3 containing a qualification which is based on employer-led standards, as well as a significant industry placement and other components. T Levels offer a high-quality, prestigious technical alternative to A Levels and are aligned with work-based technical education also provided at level 3 through apprenticeships. T Levels are being introduced in phases from September 2020.
- **Technical education.** Technical education encompasses any education or training, such as qualifications and apprenticeships, that focuses on progression into skilled employment and requires the acquisition of both a substantial body of technical knowledge and a set of practical skills valued by industry. Technical education covers provision from level 2 (the equivalent of GCSEs at A* to C or 9 to 4) to higher education (level 6), but it differs from A Levels and other academic options in that it draws its purpose from the workplace rather than an academic discipline.
- **Traineeships.** A traineeship is a skills development programme that includes a work placement. Traineeships help 16 to 24 year olds - or 25 year olds with an education, health and care (EHC) plan - get ready for an apprenticeship or job if they don't have the appropriate skills or experience. It can last from six weeks up to one year.

- **UK Shared Prosperity Fund.** A fund to replace structural funding from the European Union at the end of the transition period. European Union funding has been used for boosting several aspects of economic development, including support for businesses, employment and agriculture.

