

### Colleges Week 2021

Colleges Week 2021 (18–22 October) is the fourth year of celebration since the launch of the #LoveOurColleges campaign in 2018. For the first year ever, we're having a Colleges Week theme, focusing our activities around 'Get in, go further'. Throughout the week, colleges across the country will be taking part in a range of activities to celebrate and shout about all of the brilliant things they do, day in and day out to build communities, boost businesses, and support individuals. During Colleges Week, we'll also be publishing a report which will set out the role of colleges in delivering the green agenda.

### [Introduction to colleges and key facts](#)

English colleges educate over 1.7 million students every year and employ approximately 106,000 full-time equivalent staff. Further education colleges are an essential part of England's education system. Whether it's through top-class technical education, basic skills or lifelong learning, colleges help people of all ages and backgrounds to make the most of their talents and ambitions. Rooted in local communities, they are crucial in driving social mobility and providing the skills to boost local and regional economies.

- 1 million - adults study or train in colleges.
- 652,000 - 16 to 18-year-olds study in colleges.
- 55,000 - 16 to 18-year-olds undertake an Apprenticeship through colleges.
- 10,500 - 14 to 15-year-olds are enrolled in colleges (7,500 part-time; 3,000 full-time).
- The average college trains 1,100 apprentices.

### [Current FE policy priority - Skills & Post-16 Education Bill](#)

In January 2021, the Government published the Skills for Jobs White Paper, with a clear focus on the pivotal role that further and technical education has in helping people get skills for good jobs now and in the future. Part of their 'Plan for Jobs', it recognises the importance of colleges in boosting productivity, strengthening communities, and supporting individuals. The Skills & Post-16 Education Bill, which forms the legislative underpinning for the reforms, was introduced in the House of Lords and will have its report stage and third reading there in October before arriving the Commons in early November. While we welcome the general principles of the Bill, we are clear that it must go further and have been working with Peers on amendments to strengthen the legislation. The key issue which needs to be addressed are:

#### **Creating a right to lifelong learning so everyone can access the skills they need by:**

1. Creating a maintenance support system that enables everyone to live well whilst studying or training at college across both FE and HE.
2. Reforming benefit entitlement rules so that that people that would benefit from attending college whilst unemployed don't lose out. This means removing restrictions to education and training for those in receipt of benefits.
3. Putting the Lifetime Skills Guarantee on a statutory footing, and extending it to include subsequent level 3 courses to unlock retraining for even more people.

**Joining up the education and skills system so that it better meets society's needs and gives people the skills they need by:**

4. Enshrining the creation of a 10-year education and skills strategy to deliver on wider policy agendas and to give stability to all parts of the system.
5. Creating a duty on schools and universities to collaborate with colleges and employers in the development of skills plans.

#### **Committing to sustainable investment and a greater sense of urgency by:**

6. Backing up legislative reforms with sustainable investment and measures that will support people and employers now.

When the Bill arrives in the House of Commons, we'll be working with MPs to help ensure that it delivers for colleges.

#### **[The need for a long-term funding settlement for colleges](#)**

In order to deliver on the Government's ambitious reform agenda for the sector, it's absolutely essential that the historic underfunding of colleges is addressed in October's spending review. Further education funding compares extremely unfavourably with both university and school funding - annual public funding per university student averaging £6,600 compared to £1,050 for adults in further education. Recent research from IPPR has found that if further education funding had kept up with demographic pressures and inflation over the last decade, we would be investing an extra £2.1bn per year on adult skills and £2.7bn per year on 16-19 further education. This has led to colleges having to narrow their curriculum and reduce the broader support they offer to students.

We're calling for a £4.6bn injection into colleges over the next three years to support young people and adults to have the skills to build that infrastructure, and subsequently start to reduce widening skills gaps and provide opportunities in the most disadvantaged communities. We have identified three priority areas that require action:

- **Skills for jobs** - so that colleges can ensure people have skills for the growing parts of the economy, to meet immediate skills shortages and to support business growth in all parts of the country as set out in the January 2021 Skills for Jobs White Paper.
- **Building back better in education** - to improve education provision for the growing population of young people, particularly in technical subjects while also tackling the opportunity gaps that were both widened and revealed by the pandemic.
- **Climate action** - to ensure that colleges help accelerate the development of green skills, support the transition of people from old to new sectors, develop carbon literacy among young adults and improve their own estates.

#### **What MPs can do to support colleges in Parliament:**

- Join the **All-Party Parliamentary Group on Further Education & Lifelong Learning**, which we provide the secretariat to. The Group meets regularly in Parliament and its aim is to promote and develop the interests of the further education, adult learning, and skills sectors. They can join by emailing [public\\_affairs@aoc.co.uk](mailto:public_affairs@aoc.co.uk).
- Work with us to **strengthen the Skills & Post-16 Education Bill** when it arrives in the Commons.
- Support our calls for **better funding for Colleges** in the upcoming spending review and beyond.

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**For further information or to discuss these themes in more detail, please contact:**

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