

SECTOR DEVELOPMENTS...

This edition of the newsletter is a bit longer than usual. This is because a lot seems to have happened in FE since the last newsletter was circulated. Hopefully you will still be awake by the time you reach the end!

THE AUTUMN BUDGET AND FE

In his budget speech, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, announced funding for a number of new FE initiatives in England. These include the following:

- **£8.5 million for initiatives to improve 16-19 GCSE re-sit grades in mathematics.** The government's own data continues to show that large numbers of learners aged 17 and 18 are failing to improve their GCSE re-sit grades in English and mathematics. In response, the Chancellor is making £8.5 million available to test 'innovative approaches to improving GCSE mathematics resit outcomes'. For reasons not immediately apparent, no reference was made to support for improving English GCSE re-sit grades.
- **£600 for every extra student who studies mathematics at Level 3.** To encourage more provision in mathematics beyond Level 2, the Chancellor announced that colleges and schools in England will receive £600 for each extra student who studies mathematics at Level 3. This includes both GCE A Level mathematics and the other Level 3 core mathematics qualifications introduced in 2014. How *extra* students will be distinguished from *existing* students will probably be an interesting challenge for auditors. More detail regarding GCSE re-sits can be found in a later section.
- **£40 million for mathematics 'Further Education Centres of Excellence'.** Located across the country, these will help 'train mathematics teachers' and 'spread best practice'. They are thought likely to be based in FE colleges with a record of success improving 16-18 GCSE grades (e.g. Dudley College).
- **£20 million extra to help colleges prepare for the introduction of T-Levels.** This is in addition to the £50 million that will be made available from April 2018 to help fund 'capacity building' ahead of the launch of the new T-Levels in 2020, and the annual £500 million investment in the development of T-Levels which will come on stream in 2022, both of which were announced in the Spring budget.
- **£76 million for retraining adults to take up jobs in the digital and construction sectors.** A new 'National Retraining Scheme' will be developed in partnership with the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to 'help workers to stay in secure jobs as the economy changes'. £40 million 'will be invested in programmes to train people for jobs in the construction industry such as ground workers, bricklayers, roofers and plasterers', which will be 'focused on supporting the country's housing needs'. The other £36 million 'will be invested in digital skills courses, including artificial intelligence (AI)'. Funding for training costs will be made available through the apprenticeship levy, which will also help support trainee wage costs during the training period.
- **£8.5 million extra for UnionLearn.** UnionLearn (the education arm of the TUC) will receive an extra £8.5 million over the next two years to 'help boost learning in the workplace'. This money is in addition to its current annual grant from the Department for Education (DfE), which will remain at around £12 million per year, despite earlier rumours that this funding was to be cut.
- **More 'flexibility' for employers in the way apprenticeship levy funding is spent.** The Chancellor also announced that the government would 'keep under review the flexibility apprenticeship levy payers have in spending their levy cash', which some believe suggests that at least some of the levy funding will be able to be spent on training other than for apprentices.

FE sector leaders have welcomed the additional funding for these initiatives, but many have expressed their disappointment that the issue of woefully inadequate core funding for FE provision was not addressed in the budget. One observer said that spending on more initiatives, rather than on improving the level of core FE funding, was like 'sticking racing stripes on your car in the hope that this will make it go faster'. The Chancellor also announced new minimum wage levels that will be paid from April 2018. The increases in hourly minimum wage rates as follows:

- £3.50 to £3.70 for apprentices aged 16 and 17. (Although the government's 2016 Apprenticeship Pay Survey suggested that one in five apprentices were actually being paid less than their legal minimum wage entitlement).
- £4.05 to £4.20 for 16 and 17 year-olds in full-time employment.
- £5.60 to £5.90 for those aged 18-20.
- £7.05 to £7.38 for those aged 21-24.
- £7.50 to £7.83 for those aged 25 or over.

A copy of the Chancellor's autumn budget speech can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/autumn-budget-2017-philip-hammonds-speech>

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE LOOKS AT 'UNEQUAL' LEVELS OF FE & HE FUNDING

The House of Lords Economics Affairs Committee is conducting an inquiry into 'the Economics of Higher, Further and Technical Education'. The brief of the inquiry is to 'investigate how post-school education is funded', and 'whether it focuses sufficiently on the skills which the British economy requires'. During the latest hearing of the Committee, Dr Philippa Lloyd, the Director General of HE and FE at the DfE, was questioned about the disparity between HE and FE funding in England, and was asked whether FE was getting its 'fair share'. Lord Turnbull said, 'There are 3.5 million students in FE, and the total cost is £9.8 billion, which is £2,700 per student. In HE, there are 1.5 million students, but the total amount of money going into that sector is £17.8 billion, which is £11,000 per student'. He went on to ask, 'With such a gap in funding, it is not surprising that people think that FE is not really getting a fair share?'. In response, Dr Lloyd admitted that the level of FE funding 'definitely needs attention', and went on to say that 'the introduction of the apprenticeship levy on large employers would help to put extra resource into FE'. However, she did not explain exactly how levy funding would address the inadequacy of general FE (GFE) and sixth form college (SFC) core funding. The transcript of the Committee hearings, can be found at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/economic-affairs-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/economics-of-higher-education-further-education-and-vocational-training/>

And you can watch a video the latest Committee meeting (held on 7 November) on Parliament TV at:

<http://www.parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/81217d09-54c9-4b87-8e58-723289cec7ad>

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION SPEAKS TO DELEGATES AT THE AOC CONFERENCE

In his speech to delegates at the recent Association of Colleges (AoC) Annual Conference, the Leader of the Opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, expanded on Labour's plans to establish a new National Education Service (NES) for England. He said that in parallel with the National Health Service (NHS), the NES would provide lifelong learning 'from the cradle to the grave' and, like the NHS, this would be 'provided free at the point of use'. He went on to say 'Increasing productivity is not about squeezing out every last drop of energy from working people. It's about investing in people's lives, investing in their education, their skills and their futures'. He said that Labour's NES 'will allow anybody to retrain and upskill at any point in their lives'.

Mr Corbyn also said that the government 'must wake up to the damage that FE spending cuts are causing to colleges, the damage it is doing to students' learning, and the damage it is doing to staff morale'. He called on the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, to provide 'more investment in skills-related infrastructure, new technologies and people', and 'support better pay for teachers'. During a question and answer session at the end of his speech, BBC's Steph McGovern asked Mr Corbyn how the NES would be funded. In response, Mr Corbyn explained that the extra cash needed would come through 'an increase in tax on corporations and on the wealthiest to a level similar to that in other European Union countries'.

In response to a question on college accountability, Mr Corbyn said that although 'FE and sixth form colleges were very much the product of local education authorities, the current independent model of college education means that they get too far away from local communities and their local education authorities'. He went on to say that he, and Shadow Education Secretary for England, Angela Raynor, were 'looking at a model that will bring them closer again'. This was interpreted by some conference delegates

as meaning that, if Labour were to win the next General Election, colleges might be placed back under local authority control. You can watch Mr Corbyn deliver his speech to the AoC conference on YouTube at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RkSxZu5KqA>

MINISTER FOR APPRENTICESHIP & SKILLS SPEAKS TO DELEGATES AT THE AOC CONFERENCE

The Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills in England, Anne Milton, also spoke at the AoC Conference. She told delegates that 'the approach of *by the sector, for the sector* was not, on its own, always the best response to driving up the sector's performance'. She said that her preference was for 'a more active approach by the government in driving up quality'. This, she said, was because, 'there were some issues where the government has a unique set of levers and resources that can help find solutions to shared problems'. Ms Milton also told the conference delegates that FE is 'central to the challenge of delivering a prosperous future for this country after Brexit, and in ensuring the UK has an adaptable workforce with the skills and opportunities to thrive'. She went on to say, 'The reform of technical education will be at the centre of our response to those challenges'. Further on in her speech, Ms Milton said she was aware that the funding condition that 16 and 17-year-old students with a Grade D (or 3) in GCSE mathematics and/or English had to re-sit the qualifications in college 'was something the sector felt very strongly about'. She agreed that post-school mathematics and English courses should offer 'something very different to GCSE courses taught in schools', but did not say what this 'something different' might be. A copy of Ms Milton's speech can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/anne-milton-speech-to-association-of-colleges-conference>

OFSTED CHIEF INSPECTOR FOR ENGLAND SPEAKS TO THE AOC CONFERENCE

Also speaking at the AoC Conference, the Ofsted Chief Inspector for England, Amanda Spielman, told delegates that 'too many' colleges were failing to improve to 'good' or 'outstanding', and were 'not stretching students enough'. She said that because of this, 'thousands of students are not getting the education they deserve'. She appeared to lay the blame for this firmly on senior leaders, saying that they were either 'failing to identify the 'early signs of deterioration', or 'not doing enough to fix them'. Ms Spielman did acknowledge that 'funding was a critical concern for many struggling colleges', and said she also 'appreciated concerns about the level of challenge and change in the sector'. She said that she had 'drawn the attention of members of the House of Commons Education Select Committee to this'.

Ms Spielman went on to say that Ofsted is 'revising its methodology for inspecting apprenticeship provision in colleges', and that 'pilot inspections were already planned'. She said that in these inspections there would be more focus on 'improving the progression rates of learners going from Level 2 qualifications to Level 3 apprenticeship programmes', adding that currently, 'less than 10% of students are doing this'. Ms Spielman also referred to the concerns expressed by Robert Halfon, the Chair of the Education Select Committee, about the lack of scrutiny by Ofsted of the 'hundreds of new apprenticeship providers who had entered the market, some of whom had no prior experience of running apprenticeships'. She told delegates that Ofsted was 'aware of the risks faced when large sums of money are washing around the system, with insufficient quality control'. She said that Ofsted would 'conduct early monitoring visits at all new providers to ensure that there are no scandalous attempts at fraud or other waste of public money', and would 'do all within its power to bring any malpractice to light'. A copy of Ms Spielman's speech can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/amanda-spielman-speech-at-the-association-of-colleges-ofsted-conference-a-new-direction>

AOC ISSUES 'RULES FOR FE SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES WHEN MEETING MINISTERS'

Because a number of eminent government figures were present at the recent AoC Conference, the AoC thought it might be useful set out some 'rules' for how FE staff should conduct themselves if, say, they were to find themselves stuck in a lift with a minister, and were drawn into conversation about the current state of FE. The rules were published in the conference edition of FE Week and say that staff should always be

'upbeat' if talking to ministers, and under no circumstances should they say things such as:

- '16-18 funding is inadequate'
- 'Adult funding is inadequate'
- 'Funding restrictions are causing problems'
- 'There are apprenticeship cash flow problems'
- 'There has been no capital funding for years'
- 'Lots of colleges are facing massive debts'
- 'Generally, there are lots of problems in FE'

Although not specifically mentioned in the rules, the clear implication is that they should also avoid making any reference to the very low rates of pay for FE staff, the low morale, the gradual casualization of employment, the erosion of job security, the deterioration in conditions of service, the increased stress, the exponential increases in the complexity of the job and perpetual initiative fatigue. Nor should they draw attention to the low levels of post-16 funding per student compared to other education sectors (21% less funding per pupil than for 11-15-year-olds in schools and almost two thirds less funding per student than in universities), presumably lest the minister should gain the impression that FE staff are a bunch of selfish, ungrateful whingers. One observer said this was like 'being badly beaten up, and afterwards being sure to thank your assailants for the beating, while taking great care not to complain too much about your injuries'.

UK GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES NEW INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

In the past, many British firms (and UK government departments) appear to have tried try to save money on training by recruiting skilled staff from abroad. In recent years this practice seems to have extended to the recruitment of unskilled staff. However, the seemingly limitless supply of relatively cheap skilled and unskilled labour from abroad, has both increased the UK's dependency on foreign labour, and has reduced the imperative for firms to invest in the technology needed to increase domestic productivity. The result has been stagnation, both in UK productivity and wage rates. But Brexit has now raised questions about the continued availability of this supply of foreign labour. And the recent fall in the international value of the pound has meant that seeking employment (or remaining in employment) in Britain is now less of an attractive financial proposition for foreign workers than it once was. This, in turn, has sharpened the government's focus on the need to take urgent steps to raise the skill levels of British workers and the extra investment needed to increase the productivity of British firms.

The government has started the process by publishing a White Paper entitled '*Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain for the future*', which, it says, is intended to 'improve living standards and economic growth by increasing productivity and driving up growth across the whole country'. The strategy also aims to 'raise national productivity through investment in skills training', and provides more details of the proposals announced in the budget for the establishment of the new 'National Retraining Scheme'. The £40 million announced in the spring budget will be used to pilot 'innovative approaches to helping adults up-skill and re-skill'. This, in turn, will help to inform the structure and content of the main National Retraining Scheme, which will be 'rolled out' during next year. As mentioned in the Budget statement, the White Paper says that the government will initially focus on the development of a construction training programme 'focused on supporting the country's housing needs'. It will also 'test the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and innovative education technology (EdTech) in online digital skills courses'. In addition, the White Paper says that the government will spend '£406 million on mathematics, digital and technical education, to help address the shortage of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills'. Other statements in the strategy of relevance to FE include the following:

- 'We will update school and college performance measures to ensure that students can make an informed choice between technical or academic education in time for the introduction of the first T-Levels, recognising them as equally valued routes'
- 'From April 2018, we will allow levy-paying employers in England to transfer up to 10% of their funds to another employer within their supply chain'.
- 'We will establish a technical education system that rivals the best in the world'.

A copy of the White Paper can be accessed at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/662541/industrial-strategy-white-paper-print-version.pdf

INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY REAFFIRMS THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO FE DEVOLUTION

The White Paper also reaffirms the government's commitment to FE devolution. This will begin with the 'devolution the adult education budget (AEB) to Mayoral areas in 2019'. This was originally scheduled to have happened in 2018, but has been delayed until 2019 because of the time needed to secure the necessary parliamentary approval, meaning that 2017/18 AEB allocations are likely to be rolled forward into the 2018/19 academic year. When devolution is eventually implemented, the Combined Authorities will take responsibility for adult skills training within their areas. For those colleges with adult students across two or more areas this is likely to mean two or more different funding agreements and funding allocations.

DFE PUBLISHES PROSPECTUS FOR FUNDING APPLICATIONS FOR INSTITUTES OF TECHNOLOGY (IOTS)

The DfE has published a 'prospectus' calling for proposals from those wanting to bid for a share of the £170 million in capital funding available for the establishment of the new IoTs. The bids must come from a partnership consisting of *at least*:

- One FE provider (FE College or independent training provider)
- One HE provider (HEI or 'alternative' HE provider)
- Two employers in the sectors relevant to the IoT's technical specialisms.

The call for proposals will formally open before the end of December and will close in March 2018. A bidders' conference will be held in early January 2018, allowing bidders around eight working weeks before the call closes. Bids received will be subjected to two assessment stages, as follows:

- Stage 1 will be an 'assessment of readiness to develop an IoT'. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their Stage 1 assessment in May 2018, and proposals that pass this stage will be eligible to progress to Stage 2.
- Stage 2 will be launched in summer 2018. Those who have passed Stage 1 will be required to prepare a full business case and a formal application for capital funding.

The first IoTs are expected to open sometime in 2019. A copy of the prospectus can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/institutes-of-technology-prospectus>

FE COMMISSIONER GIVEN EXTRA POWERS TO INTERVENE IN COLLEGES AT RISK OF FAILING

Previously, intervention by the FE Commissioner could only be initiated if a college was rated as:

- 'Inadequate' by Ofsted and/or
- 'Inadequate' for financial health and control by the ESFA and/or
- Failing to meet the DfE's minimum performance standards.

However, the DfE has now published a new policy which will allow the FE Commissioner to initiate formal action at a college that is 'not yet failing', but where 'diagnostic assessment has revealed it is in danger of doing so'. This means that intervention can occur *before* a college is designated as failing, if it is thought that action needs to be taken quickly. This will usually be if the 'existing leadership and/or governance at the college is seen as an impediment to securing necessary improvement' and 'needs to be changed'. Diagnostic assessments will be carried out by the Commissioner and his team, who will 'review the college's financial and educational performance, self-assessment and improvement plans, meet with senior leaders and others at the college, and assess the capacity and capability of leadership and governance to see improvement through'. There will be 3 possible outcomes from diagnostic assessments

These are:

- 'Endorsement of the college's approach to improving'
- 'Requirement of a new action plan for recovery'
- 'Escalation to formal intervention'.

The last option will be triggered where:

- 'The college is not taking sufficient action to address concerns' and/or
- 'The college has no realistic plan to improve areas which are of concern to Ofsted or the EFSA' and/or
- 'The existing leadership and/or governance at the college is seen as an impediment to securing necessary improvement'.

A copy of the new intervention policy can be accessed at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/662365/FE_colleges_intervention_policy_and_commissioner_role.pdf

OFSTED 'SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE' VISITS REPLACED BY SINGLE MONITORING VISIT WITH PUBLISHED REPORTS

Ofsted is proposing a more robust approach to inspecting those FE providers graded overall as 'requires improvement'. Since 2013, these providers have received 'support and challenge' visits, after which Ofsted sends a 'progress' letter to the institution, which is *not* published on the Ofsted website. Ofsted is now proposing that, instead of 'support and challenge' visits, it will conduct a 'single monitoring visit between 7 and 13 months following the original inspection'. The new monitoring visit will 'focus on identifying weaknesses', including judgments on:

- 'What the provider has achieved since the last inspection'
- 'What improvement they still need to make', and
- 'What steps the provider has taken to tackle the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection and how effective these steps have been'.

A report on the visit will be published on the Ofsted website, and Ofsted says that this will 'help learners and employers see the progress providers are making'. The next full inspection of the provider will be between 12 and 24 months after the original inspection, as at present. A consultation on the proposal is currently underway and runs until 22 December. A copy of the consultation document can be accessed at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/658342/CONSULTATION_DOCUMENT_inspection_visits_to_FES_providers_judged_RI_Final_doc.pdf

NEW INSOLVENCY LEGISLATION MAKES IT MORE DIFFICULT TO SECURE LOANS FROM BANKS

The Technical and Further Education Act 2017, which came into law in May, introduced a new statutory insolvency regime for the FE sector. The act offers an insolvency framework for colleges in financial difficulty, which is closely aligned with the Insolvency Act for commercial corporate entities. However, it also specifically provides for the making of a 'special education administration' (SEA) order by the court, 'to provide for and protect learners'. Therefore, should a college be faced with formal insolvency, although the more traditional insolvency processes, such as administration and company voluntary arrangement may apply, in practical terms the new SEA order route will be more likely. The possibility of college insolvency means that commercial banks are now seeing the FE sector as an increasingly 'risky proposition', particularly given the financial difficulties which many colleges are now facing. The main two lenders, Barclays and Lloyds, which in 2014 accounted for 90% of college loans, say they are taking steps to 'reduce their exposure', while Santander is now only offering 'very limited new lending'. Other banks are said to be actively 'trying to get out of their loans'. This has led to 'higher interest margins and tougher covenants', making it more difficult and more expensive for colleges to borrow, ironically leaving them more exposed to the risk of insolvency. Further information on college insolvency, the SEA and a copy of the Technical and Further Education Act 2017 can be accessed at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/19/contents/enacted/data.htm>

EXTRA FUNDING ANNOUNCED TO HELP IMPROVE GCSE RE-SIT RESULTS

Since 2013, in England all 16-19-year-olds without at least a grade C (now a Grade 4) in GCSE mathematics or English have had to enrol on re-sit courses alongside their main study programmes. This requirement was tightened up in 2015 to require all of those with a Grade D (now a Grade 3) in those subjects to sit a GCSE course, rather than an equivalent course such as functional skills. However, the DfE's own data shows that in 2016 only around 1 in 4 young people taking GCSE re-sits in mathematics and around 3 in 10 young people taking GCSE English re-sits managed to achieve the required grades.

As mentioned above, the UK government has responded to this by allocating £8.5 million in the autumn Budget to provide help in bringing about the required improvement in mathematics. In addition to this, in 2016, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and J.P. Morgan established a £5 million fund to find ways of helping college students improve their results in their GCSE resits. The latest allocation from the fund is focussed on improving GCSE English re-sit results. Six colleges will take part in the trial of 'Assess for Success', a programme developed by the Manchester College, which will involve 1,200 students. Instead of taking the computerised diagnostic assessments used by most colleges, students will be asked to complete short, handwritten exercises. These will be complemented by regular, 'bitesize' tests that focus on skills in the use of English. It is hoped that this latest project 'will help teachers to develop a better understanding of students' current capabilities as well as to adapt their teaching appropriately'. The 3 previous projects are listed below and further details can be accessed via the associated web links

- 'Texting students and study supporters' <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/texting-students-and-study-supporters/>
- 'Maths for Life' <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/maths-for-life/>
- 'Embedding contextualisation in English and Maths re-sit GCSE teaching' <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/embedding-contextualisation-in-english-and-mathematics-gcse-teaching/>

COLLEGES 'NEED TO DO MORE TO MOTIVATE GCSE MATHS AND ENGLISH RE-SIT STUDENTS'

The DfE has published a report which says that colleges 'need to do more to motivate students who are taking GCSE mathematics and English re-sits'. The report's authors accept that the re-sit policy 'can be demotivating for some students', but nevertheless argue that colleges could, and should do more to 'cultivate a positive mental attitude'. They go on to say that this should be a 'central feature of further education teaching'. The authors helpfully suggest a number of strategies for this, including 'developing an adult-to-adult relationship', 'making use of the different environment in colleges compared to schools', 'trying different methods to develop subject understanding', 'better use of data and lesson observations', and 'taking more account of the needs of the high numbers of learners with additional support needs such as dyslexia, autism or mental health issues', presumably because they think that FE staff are incapable of thinking of such things themselves. The report can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-and-maths-for-16-to-18-year-olds-effective-teaching>

SIR MICHAEL WILSHAW LAYS INTO FE COLLEGES (AGAIN)

Like something in a toilet bowl that just can't be flushed away, the former Ofsted Chief Inspector for England, Sir Michael Wilshaw, has popped up again. This time at a conference held at the University of Central London (UCL) Institute of Education (IoE) on 'The academic/vocational divide', where he told delegates that colleges should 'stop complaining about the GCSE mathematics and English re-sit policy', and 'damn well get off their backsides and work harder to improve GCSE resit results'. He went on to tell attendees that FE colleges were 'the most autonomous, the most unscrutinised and the most underperforming in the education system', and that it was therefore 'hardly surprising that two-thirds of youngsters who didn't achieve benchmark GCSE grades in English and maths at 16, didn't achieve those

grades two years later'. You can watch Sir Michael's lambasting FE in a video of the IoE event that can be found at the link below. Sir Michael's tirade begins around 14 minutes in.

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/news-events/events-pub/nov-2017/what-if-overcoming-academic-vocational-divide>

CONSULTATION ON T-LEVELS

The Secretary of State for Education for England, Justine Greening, used her speech at the recent DfE sponsored Skills Summit to launch the long-awaited public consultation on the introduction of T-Levels (which incidentally is the 27th attempt at reforming vocational qualifications). The consultation comes in the form of an online survey, with responses required by 8 February 2018. Perhaps more interesting is what is *not* up for consultation. For example, T-Levels qualifications will *only* be made available at Level 3, thereby reinforcing their equivalence to GCE A Levels. Although there will therefore be no T-Level qualification at Level 2 or below, it remains a possibility that T-Level qualifications at Levels 4 and 5 may be offered at some point in the future 'to provide progression'. The mandatory 3-month 'high quality' work placement is also *not* up for negotiation, despite the concerns expressed by some sector leaders. Ms Greening used the launch to call for 'more industry experts to become teachers and help deliver the new T-Levels'. A copy of the consultation document can be accessed at:

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/technical-education/implementation-of-t-level-programmes/consultation/>

MEMBERSHIP OF THE FIRST SIX T-LEVEL ROUTE PANELS ANNOUNCED

T-Level panels are responsible for developing the content for new T-Level courses. The DfE has published a list of members of the panels for the first six of the 15 T-Level routes, covering the qualifications scheduled to be delivered in 2020 and 2021. The panels within the first six routes are as follows:

- Digital Route (Data and Business Services panel, IT Support and Services panel, and Software Applications Design and Development panel).
- Education and Childcare Route (Education and Childcare panel).
- Construction Route (Design, Surveying and Planning panel, On-site Construction panel, and Building Services Engineering panel).
- Health and Science Route (Health panel, Healthcare Science panel, and Science panel).
- Legal, Financial and Accounting Route (Legal panel, Financial and Accounting panel).
- Engineering and Manufacturing Route (Design and Development panel, Maintenance panel, Installation and Repair panel, and Manufacture and Process panel).

The composition of the 15 T-Level Route panels mirrors the 15 Apprenticeship Route panels, but with different membership. This has resulted in accusations of unnecessary duplication. The names of those appointed to the above panels can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/663397/T_Level_panel_members_-_2020_and_2021_delivery.pdf

NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE INSTITUTE FOR APPRENTICESHIPS (IFA) APPOINTED

Sir Gerry Berragan has been appointed the new Chief Executive of the IfA. Sir Gerry was a soldier for 37 years, finishing his army career as Adjutant General with responsibility for army personnel matters. He was already an IfA board member and, in 2008, was appointed the army's apprenticeships ambassador. Sir Gerry has said that he wants the army to be 'the largest apprenticeships provider in the country', and with the army now offering 45 apprenticeship schemes for all age ranges, this might not be far away from being achieved. Given the recent cuts to defence spending, one observer was said to have inquired whether our next overseas military engagement might possibly be spearheaded by a new 'Royal Regiment of Apprentices'. Further details of Sir Gerry's appointment can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/institute-chief-executive-announcement>

MEMBERSHIP OF IFA ROUTE PANELS ANNOUNCED

The IfA has announced the full membership lists for its 15 Industry Route panels. Members are predominantly from industrial and private-sector backgrounds (including private sector training) and from HE, and will join the previously announced 15 chairs of the panels. There are no representatives on any panel from the FE college sector. Members are appointed to panels on a two-year term, and the IfA says that further appointments may be made 'in response to the demands of emerging apprenticeship standards'. The names of those appointed to the 15 IfA route panels can be accessed at:

<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/about/news-events/institute-for-apprenticeships-appoints-industry-experts-to-lead-approval-of-new-apprenticeship-standards/>

EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE LAUNCHES ANOTHER INQUIRY INTO APPRENTICESHIPS

Another inquiry into apprenticeships and skills training has been launched by the House of Commons Education Select Committee. The chair of the Committee is Robert Halfon, who was Anne Milton's predecessor as Apprenticeships and Skills Minister for England. The inquiry will look at all forms of government-funded apprenticeships and the Committee is inviting written submissions on the following:

- 'The quality of current provision, how this varies by sector, level and region'.
- 'The impact of this variation on learner outcomes'.
- 'The effectiveness of the quality monitoring system, in particular the role and capacity of Ofsted'.
- 'The role of the ESFA in ensuring value for money and the impact of different funding models'.
- 'The quality and oversight of training provided by subcontractors'.
- 'The quality of training received by the socially disadvantaged, and the barriers they face'.

The deadline for submissions is January 5, and further details can be accessed at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/education-committee/news-parliament-2017/quality-of-apprenticeships-and-skills-launch-17-19/>

MANY APPRENTICES NOT RECEIVING THE REQUIRED OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING OR THE STATUTORY MINIMUM WAGE

A survey of 800 employers who employed apprentices commissioned by the Learning and Work Institute (LWI) found that 32% did not realise they had to allow their apprentices the equivalent of one in five days of off-the-job training, and 23% did not know that this training time should be included in an apprentice's contracted hours of employment. A copy of the LWI report, entitled '*Apprenticeship Pay: Sticking to the rules*', can be accessed at:

<http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Apprentice-Pay-sticking-to-the-rules-FINAL.pdf>

NEW REPORT SAYS THAT TWO THIRDS OF APPRENTICESHIPS ARE EXISTING EMPLOYEE 'CONVERSIONS'

The Sutton Trust has recently published a report entitled '*Better apprenticeships*', that claims that 'two thirds of apprentices are merely existing employees who have been re-designated as apprentices'. The report also says that 'there is no robust procedure in place to ensure existing employees are improving their skills rather than just being accredited for their existing competence'. The report recommends that during inspections Ofsted should 'check that existing employees are participating in substantial training to develop new skills and occupational expertise'. The report also claims that 'by rebadging existing staff as apprentices, some employers can circumvent the apprenticeship levy', and that it was 'vital that there are tough minimum expectations' that can't 'be dodged by clever accountants'. The report can be found at:

<https://www.suttontrust.com/research-paper/better-apprenticeships/>

GOVERNMENT TARGET OF 3 MILLION APPRENTICESHIP STARTS BY 2020 MAY NOT BE ACHIEVABLE

The government's target of three million apprenticeship starts by 2020 appears to be increasingly unachievable. New figures from the DfE, confirm that around 48,000 people started an apprenticeship between May and July, compared with 117,000 in the same period last year. This represents a dramatic contraction of 60%. The latest figures also show that while starts increased dramatically to around 78,000 in April (the month before the introduction of the apprenticeship levy and employer co-payments took effect) they fell equally dramatically to just 12,900 starts in May (the month after it was introduced). Apprenticeship start figures have previously only been available on a quarterly basis, but the DfE has now started to release a monthly breakdown as part of its final statistics for 2016/17. The data shows that there is no sign of any recovery in the number of apprenticeship starts with average monthly starts being around 17%, lower than where they need to be to achieve the 2020 target. The DfE report can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/660580/SFR62_Nov_2017.pdf

And a copy of the DfE November First Statistical Release data can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/further-education-and-skills-november-2017>

TENDER RESULTS ANNOUNCED FOR APPRENTICESHIP FUNDING ALLOCATIONS FOR NON-LEVY PAYING EMPLOYERS

The tender results for a share of £650 million of apprenticeship funding for non-levy paying employers has been released by the ESFA. The process has proved to be extremely complicated to the point of being almost incomprehensible. There are 18 'budget groupings' based on England's nine regions, with two different age ranges, 6-18 and 19 and over. The ESFA divided the £650 million total budget available by the total value of successful tenders to generate a 'pro rata percentage'. Any pro rata percentage that exceeded 100%, was capped at 100% so that resulting awards did not exceed tender values. The capped pro rata percentages were then applied to the value of the successful tenders in the respective budget groupings. These were then combined to form a total contract award at individual provider level (and good luck with getting a grip of all this). Many of those who bid for funds were left disappointed with their allocations, while some received no allocation at all. There was also a significant variation in allocations to providers at regional level. More information can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/update-on-procurement-for-non-levy-paying-employers> and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work>

MORE UNIVERSITIES ENTERING THE ENGLISH FE AND APPRENTICESHIPS MARKET

Universities are increasingly entering what was previously regarded as the FE market. Over the period from 2015/16 to 2016/17, the number of universities in receipt of funding for FE provision has almost trebled, from 21 to 62, and university income from apprenticeships, traineeships and the adult education budget has more than doubled, from £12.6 million in 2015/16, to £31.9 million in 2016/17. This can partly be explained by the growth in the number of higher level and degree apprenticeships. According to the latest government data, the number of higher-level apprenticeships has increased tenfold over the past six years, from 5,700 in 2011/12 to 61,000 in 2016/17. The trend looks set to continue with, for example, Middlesex University promoting itself as the 'University for Skills', and pledging to develop new vocational programmes at a range of levels, including apprenticeships and Level 3 'year-zero' degree preparation courses. Tensions between the FE and HE sectors looks set to intensify in the wake of the government's recent announcement of review of higher-level technical education, which the government defines as 'post-secondary, sub-tertiary qualifications at level 4 and 5', much of which clearly resides in the contested space between HE and FE. Details of the forthcoming review of Level 4 and 5 qualifications can be accessed at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/level-4-5-technical-education-to-be-reviewed>

FORMER ESFA CHIEF BECOMES CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE STUDENT LOANS COMPANY (SLC)

Peter Lauener, who up until his retirement last month (November), was both Chief Executive of the ESFA and interim Chief Executive of the IfA, has been appointed as interim Chief Executive of the SLC. His appointment follows the sudden departure of its previous Chief Executive, following investigations into aspects of his management and leadership, Mr Lauener takes up his new post at a time when student debt in England has reached almost £100 billion, the vast majority of which has been predicted never to be repaid. He will remain in the post until a permanent replacement can be found.

APPLICATIONS FOR FE ADVANCED LEARNER LOANS CONTINUE TO FALL

The latest DfE data shows that the number advanced learner loan applications in England are continuing to fall. Applications so far for 2017/18 stand at around 54,900, a reduction of around 11,100 (17%) compared to this time last year. Applications from those aged 24-30 have shown the biggest decline, down from 19,630 this time last year to 15,650 this year (20%). Other than for the very small number of loan applications for GCE A Level course applications, applications for other Level 3 courses have seen the largest contraction of all, with 33,860 applications to date in 2017/18, down 22% from the same time last year. The most recent data on 2016/17 loan applications can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/advanced-learner-loans-application-information-november-2017>

FALL IN ADULT PARTICIPATION IN FE AND THE NUMBERS ACHIEVING FE QUALIFICATIONS

Recently released DfE data reveals that in England:

- The number of adults achieving a publicly funded FE qualification has fallen by 6.8% from 1,694,500 in 2015/16 to 1,578,900 in 2016/17.
- The number of adults on government-funded FE courses has dropped for the fifth year in a row from 2,324,700 in 2015/16 to 2,236,800 in 2016/17, a fall of 3.8%.
- There has been a continuing decline in the numbers of adults taking a full Level 2 apprenticeship, with a reduction of 35.3% between 2015/16 and 2016/17.

The DfE data can be accessed at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/660580/SFR62_Nov_2017.pdf

ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST

The 'Manchester Creative Studio School', which has been suffering from financial and performance problems since it opened three years ago, faces closure after attempts to find new sponsors for the school and for its sister institution, which is called (and you probably couldn't make this up) the 'Collective Spirit Free School' in Oldham, which is also in special measures. The local Schools' Commissioner has admitted turning the schools around would be a 'challenging task', and that the 'option of closure' for the studio school was being 'strongly considered'. If it does close, this will be the 18th studio school to do so. Eight University Technical Colleges (UTCs) have also closed.

SCHOOLS OBLIGED TO ALLOW PROVIDERS OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND APPRENTICESHIPS ACCESS TO PUPILS

The Technical and Further Education Act, which came into law in May this year, contains a stipulation that from 2 January 2018, all academies and local authority maintained schools in England will be legally obliged to allow providers of technical education and apprenticeships (including FE colleges) on to their premises, to allow them to talk to pupils in years 8 to 13 about the post-14, post-16 and post-18 options available to them. Schools must also publish a policy statement outlining the rules for granting and refusing access. The requirement is the result of an amendment to the Bill proposed in the Lords by the former education secretary Lord Baker, who was mainly concerned about opening access for 14-19 UTCs and Studio Schools. The DfE guidance to schools on complying with these new obligations can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-education-and-apprenticeships-raising-awareness>

SKILLS MINISTER FOR ENGLAND LAUNCHES GOVERNMENT'S NEW STRATEGY FOR CAREERS GUIDANCE

Since 2012, schools and colleges in England have had primary responsibility for the provision of impartial careers advice to their pupils and students. This is a move that has been the subject of criticism, since it would appear that the advice provided (particularly in schools) has been not always been impartial, and in some cases, advice has not been provided at all. In an attempt to rectify this, Anne Milton, the Minister for Apprenticeship and Skills in England, used the annual conference of Careers Development Institute to launch the DfE's long-awaited new careers strategy. The strategy involves:

- *Providing dedicated careers leaders:* £4 million will be allocated to provide 'dedicated careers leaders' for schools and colleges. Every school and college will also be expected to publish details of their careers programme for young people by September 2018. Ofsted will comment on the quality of careers guidance in inspection reports.
- *Developing quality interactions between schools and businesses:* Secondary schools will be expected to provide pupils with at least one 'meaningful interaction' with businesses every year, with a particular focus on employers from science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) industries.
- *Setting up careers hubs across the country:* The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) will receive £5 million funding to develop 20 careers hubs for young people in the most disadvantaged areas. The hubs will 'link together schools, colleges, universities and local businesses to broaden the aspirations of young people'. The CEC will also facilitate 'industry advisers' who will 'use their networks to help pupils and students obtain work experience and obtain a better insight into the key skills needed by local businesses'. (The CEC has already received around £70 million in public funding to help facilitate this).
- *Providing specialist advice for long-term unemployed and those with additional needs:* The National Careers Service (NCS) will provide 'access to specialist support for adults who need it most'. Also, the NCS website will be revamped, so that from 2018, all careers information will be available in one place.

The new careers strategy is published in a policy paper entitled '*Careers strategy: making the most of everyone's skills and talents*', a copy of which can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-strategy-making-the-most-of-everyones-skills-and-talents>

COLLEGES TO JUSTIFY HIGH SALARIES RECEIVED BY SOME PRINCIPALS AND SENIOR STAFF

Following the public outrage at the level of remuneration and perk received by some university vice-chancellors and senior staff, the Minister for Universities in England, Jo Johnson, has required university governing councils to provide a justification for the pay of all university employees with an annual salary of in excess of £150,000. Following on from this, the new Chief Executive of the ESFA, Eileen Miller, has decreed that FE college corporations must also provide a justification for the pay of all college staff who are paid over £150,000 a year. Ms Miller has also written to 29 academy trusts asking them to defend what has been alleged to be salaries in excess of £150,000 for their chief executives.

UNIVERSITIES HAVE CLAIMS SCRUTINISED BY THE ADVERTISING STANDARDS AUTHORITY

The very high tuition fees paid 'up front' to universities by the DfE through the SLC, and the abolition of the cap on the number of students that universities can enrol has resulted in 'intense competition' to recruit students. Competition for overseas students and the lucrative fees they pay is equally 'intense' and is another reason why universities are attempting to appear to be higher achieving than other competitor HE institutions. Commenting on this, the Director of the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI), has gone so far as to say that universities seem to be 'engaging in marketing practices that could be regarded as questionable' and that the level of competition now has a 'touch of the Wild West about it'.

It does seem that every UK university is now claiming 'in the top 10', or 'top 1%', or 'university of the year', or 'world leading' for something or other, and all claim to be the pathway to a great job. Because of this, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has issued guidelines to universities in an attempt to stop them making their more extreme misleading claims. Thus far, the ASA has required six universities to modify their advertising because they were selectively quoting from various rankings and/or failing to back their

claims with reliable evidence. The universities concerned insist that their claims are based on external university rankings and league tables. However, there are literally scores of league tables, such as the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, the QS World University Rankings, the CWUR World University Rankings, the Academic Ranking of World Universities and rankings from newspapers such as the Independent, the Sunday Times and the Guardian. There are also separate sub-rankings based on individual subjects, departments, types of university or regional breakdowns, all of which have their own methodology, and all of which produce different rankings. Unlike school league tables, these rankings tend not to be about examination results or the quality of students' work, but are based on criteria such as 'reputation', 'research citations', 'research funding allocations' and 'staff ratios'. And, of course, universities decide their own degree grades, with the University of Surrey awarding a first-class degree to 41% of its students in 2015/16. And as an example of the potential for distortion, the University of Leicester claims to be in the 'top 1% of world universities'. However, the university was ranked 238th in the QS World University Rankings and 237th in the CWUR World University Rankings. These particular rankings are based on around 1,000 universities, but the University of Leicester's claim to be in the top 1% is based on there being at least 28,000 universities in the world, many of which will be of dubious quality.

UNIVERSITIES MAY BE MIS-SELLING COURSE LOANS TO YOUNG PEOPLE

A new National Audit Office (NAO) report entitled '*The Higher Education Market*' says that the 'average student loan in England is expected to top £50,000 by the time it is repaid' and 'will require a long-term commitment'. The report goes on to say, 'Young people are taking out substantial loans to pay for courses, without much effective help and advice, and that universities 'are under very little competitive pressure to provide best value'. The report points out that 'the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) requires companies to disclose clearly the risks of such products to potential customers', but in comparison, universities are subject to 'limited comparable disclosure requirements', and that 'if student loans were considered as being sold in a market, the market would have a number of points of failure'. A copy of the report can be found at:

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/the-higher-education-market/>

BBC PANORAMA PROGRAMME EXPOSES SERIOUS STUDENT LOAN FRAUD

As part of the government's reform strategy for FE and HE, more private providers are being encouraged to enter the market in both sectors. Currently, around £400 million a year is received by 112 private colleges through the student loan system. However, a recent BBC Panorama undercover investigation has exposed how 'education agents' are recruiting bogus students to mainly private colleges and universities so they can fraudulently claim maintenance and tuition loans they are not entitled to. The agents take 'commission' from the loans from both students and colleges. The investigation also shows how fraudulent qualifications can be made available to enable bogus students to gain entrance to courses, how coursework is offered for sale and how a student's attendance can be faked. One agent explained to the undercover reporter how, for a fee, he could gain degree level qualifications without ever attending a course. One agent was secretly filmed explaining how he got bogus students admitted into a government-approved private college for a £600 fee. This would then allow the bogus students to fraudulently claim student loans. Then, for £1,500 a year paid from the loan funding received, the agent offered to fake attendance records and to provide all their coursework. Asked to comment on the programme's findings, a spokesperson for the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) said that the new Office for Students (OfS) 'has 'important new powers of search and entry', and that previously, the absence of these powers 'made tackling fraud a challenge for all parties'. The Panorama programme is well worth watching and, at the time of writing, can be found on BBC iPlayer at:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b09g5l1c/panorama-student-loan-scandal>

HOUSE OF LORDS ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE LOOKS AT 'DEGREE GRADE INFLATION'

During the witness session held at the meeting of the Committee on 7 November (see section on 'unequal FE and HE funding' above) Dr Philippa Lloyd, Director General of HE and FE at the DfE, was asked about 'degree grade inflation'. Lord Forsyth said 'I am looking at the figures. In 2015/16, 24% of students gained a

first-class degree, up from 17% in 2011/12 and 7% in 1994/95. Three-quarters of students now gain a First or Upper Second, compared with 66% in 2011 and fewer than half in the mid-1990s'. He then asked, 'Would a good way of attracting students not be the prospect of getting a first-class degree?'. In reply, Dr Lloyd said that a 'grade inflation metric is now being put in place', and that the Minister for Universities in England had 'challenged the sector to come up with sector-specific standards to help to ensure that the qualifications students achieve have lasting value'. She added that the new Office for Students had also been asked to 'analyse the evidence and data' relating to grade inflation' on an annual basis.

TWO-YEAR DEGREE PROGRAMMES WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM 2019

Universities Minister for England, Jo Johnson has announced that students in England are to be offered more intensive two-year degree courses with effect from September 2019. A proposal for two-year degrees was made earlier this year, but Mr Johnson has now added details in respect of structure (students would take the same number of units and have the same amount of teaching and supervision, but courses would be delivered in one less year with shorter holidays), and fee levels (£11,000 per year over 2 years compared to £9,250 per year over 3 years, a saving of £5,500). Mr Johnson argues that in addition to a reduction in tuition fees, students will save on a year's living costs and will be able to start working a year earlier, a package which he says could cut costs for students by a further £25,000. It would also be cheaper for the government, which would have lower tuition fee loans to fund. The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) says the plan could help to widen opportunities and increase the number of mature students, but Labour's Shadow Education Secretary for England, Angela Rayner said there was 'no evidence that squeezing three years of learning into two will stop the huge drop in part-time students or lead to better outcomes'.

FEWER NURSES TRAINING IN ENGLAND IN FIRST YEAR AFTER NHS BURSARY SCRAPPED

Data provided by NHS trusts and Foundation Trusts in England at the end of September this year showed that there were more than 36,000 nurse vacancies, which is the highest on record. In 2015, the former Chancellor George Osborne announced that nursing bursaries would be scrapped in England, and that students would be required to take out a student loan to pay tuition fees of around £9,000 a year instead. Mr Osborne said that the £800 million a year saved from scrapping the bursaries would be used to 'create thousands more training places'. However, the latest UCAS figures reveal that in 2017, the first year after training bursaries for nurses in England were scrapped, rather than an increase, there were 710 fewer nurses being trained than in the previous year. The UCAS data also shows that applications to study nursing fell by one fifth). Meanwhile the numbers accepted in Wales and Scotland, where the bursaries have been kept, have increased by 8.4% and 8% respectively. The UCAS data can be accessed at:

<https://www.ucas.com/file/136531/download?token=A0UpZoEd>

AND NEARLY FINALLY...

When colleges close for the Christmas period, there will be some who will crave the 'adrenalin rush' of dealing with the usual insurmountable FE problems. For those who may be suffering from 'cold turkey', here are 20 Christmas Cracker quiz questions to take your mind off things. The answers are at the end.

1. How did Mary and Joseph know that Jesus was exactly 7lb 6oz when he was born?
2. How would you describe a group of chess players bragging about their games in a hotel lobby?
3. What do workers at Sports Direct get for Christmas dinner?
4. How can you recognise a Christmas tree from BHS?
5. What is Vince Cable's favourite Christmas song?
6. How will Christmas dinner be different after Brexit?
7. Why didn't Roy Hodgson get to visit Santa at the North Pole?
8. Why is Jeremy Corbyn asking people not to eat sprouts at Christmas?
9. How was Scrooge helped to score a goal in the Misers Utd vs Workhouse Rangers football match?
10. Why wouldn't Santa be treated in an NHS hospital?
11. What does the clementine in your Christmas stocking have in common with Donald Trump?
12. What is Donald Trump's favourite Christmas carol?

13. What Christmas carol can be heard in the desert?
14. When Santa got stuck up a chimney, he began to shout. What was he suffering from?
15. What do you get if you cross Santa with a duck?
16. If Santa tried to sell Donner and Blitzen on eBay, why would no one bid for them?
17. What does Miley Cyrus have for her Christmas dinner?
18. How does good King Wenceslas prefer his pizzas?
19. What do annoyed mice send to each other at Christmas?
20. If you find you have inadvertently eaten some Christmas decorations, what might you get?

Answers

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. <i>They had a weigh in a manger</i> | 11. <i>They're both a little orange</i> |
| 2. <i>Chess nuts boasting in an open foyer</i> | 12. <i>O comb over ye faithful</i> |
| 3. <i>About 5 minutes</i> | 13. <i>O camel ye faithful</i> |
| 4. <i>All the branches have gone</i> | 14. <i>Claustrophobia</i> |
| 5. <i>All I want for Christmas is EU.</i> | 15. <i>A Christmas quacker</i> |
| 6. <i>No Brussels</i> | 16. <i>They're two deer</i> |
| 7. <i>He couldn't get past Iceland</i> | 17. <i>Twirky</i> |
| 8. <i>He wants to give peas a chance</i> | 18. <i>Deep pan, crisp and even</i> |
| 9. <i>The ghost of Christmas passed</i> | 19. <i>Cross mouse cards</i> |
| 10. <i>He has private elf care</i> | 20. <i>Tinsilitis</i> |

1.

AND FINALLY...

From all of us at Click



*A Merry **Clickmas**, and a happy, peaceful and prosperous New Year*

Alan Birks – December 2017

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