nus NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Further Education Zone Proposal

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Proposal:	Putting Learners at the heart of the Post 16 Skills Plan
Submitted by:	Further Education Zone committee

Conference believes:

1. In July 2016 the government announced their vision for the future of Technical Education and Apprenticeships in the form of the Post 16 Skills Plan.
2. The Post 16 Skills Plan implements all of the recommendations made by the Labour Peer, Lord Sainsbury, in the Sainsbury Review.
3. It presents a radical, but largely welcomed overhaul of Further Education.
4. For too long technical education has been seen as holding less value than "academic" post 16 routes, such as A-Levels. The plan seeks to create parity of esteem between technical and academic education, including the ability to move easily between the two at level 3.
5. That 68% per cent of students think that 16 is too early to be making choices which will define their future career path.
6. That the plan includes provisions for 16 year olds and adults returning to education to undertake a 'Transition Year', giving them further time to consider their options.
7. That Black students and women are severely underrepresented in areas of Further Education, including apprenticeships and STEM subjects.
8. That there are specific targets in the plan, including a 20% increase in Black apprenticeship starts by 2020 and gender parity in the working population by 2030.
9. That the plan includes positive provisions for learners with disabilities and learners from low socio-economic backgrounds, including SEND support until the age of 25 and free or subsidised training for NEETs aged 19 -24.

Conference further believes:

1. That whilst the ambitions of the Skills Plan are welcomed, there are concerns about its implementation.
2. The Government's focus on ensuring employers are at the heart of the Skills Plan is deeply troubling. Education is about more than employment and the Government need to recognise this, not least when they are designing the transition year, bridging provision and the "common core" of technical education.
3. The attention given to apprenticeships is positive, but the push for 3 million extra apprentices by 2020 causes serious concerns around quality.
4. In similar European models there have not been enough apprenticeships available to meet demand. And in England, employers are less likely to employ an apprentice who is under 25.[1]
5. The Government must ensure employers are incentivised to hire younger apprentices.
6. That the plan does not adequately detail provision for SEND learners, especially level 1 and pre-entry level learners in specialist colleges.
7. That Advanced Learner Loans are failing FE-based learning, with only 4,900 learners achieving level 4 and 5 awards in 2014/15[2].
8. That the continued expansion of University Technical Colleges (UTC) is deeply flawed. UTCs are a failed project that the Government must stop advocating for.

Conference resolves:

1. To work with the DfE and the NSoA to shape the plan and ensure that apprentices' and learners' needs are central to any decisions.
2. To work with Students Unions to ensure that FE learners are aware of the skills plan and the impact it will have on Further Education.

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-apprenticeships
[2] http://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/remaking-tertiary-education-web.pdf

3. To continue to lobby for impartial, quality careers Information, Advice and Guidance and to respond and act on any careers strategy that is released.
4. To consult with specialist colleges on SEND provision and lobby DfE to include it in the plan.
5. To lobby for apprentice and learner representation on the Institute for Apprenticeships board.
6. To work with NSoA, AELP and the Institute to ensure that quality apprenticeship experience, both in on and off the job learning, is both defined and improve.
7. To campaign against the fees and loans model for levels 4 and 5.
8. To campaign against the expansion of UTCs.

Proposal:	Save our Support Services
Submitted by:	Further Education Zone Committee

Conference believes:

1. Support services such as teaching and learning support, support for disabled students and childcare provision are vital in enabling learners to access further education.
2. They are also crucial in ensuring that learners are able to succeed and learn in their teaching environment.
3. Funding for Colleges has decreased by 27% since 2010. The Adults Skills Budget has decreased by 35% since 2009.
4. The cuts to FE Colleges and Sixth Form colleges by the Government have affected their ability to provide teaching and learning support.[3]
5. Around a third of part time and 40% of full time students in FE are parents. The majority of these are women and mature students. Around half of students report having missed classes because of problems with childcare and only 11% report receiving funding which covers all of their childcare costs.[4]
6. A recent report into the experiences of FE and HE student parents in Scotland has revealed much the same; almost 80% of respondents reported facing problems with time management and almost 70% faced financial difficulties.
7. The cuts in services disproportionately affect women, black and LGBT students as well as learners with disabilities and learning difficulties and learners with caring responsibilities.
8. These cuts to support services have been accompanied by a real time increase in the cost of Further Education for learners.
9. Support funds such as Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and the Adult Learning Grant (ALG) have been axed, whilst students have been forced to put an ever increasing amount of money into their education.
10. Course costs, equipment costs and transport costs have risen, yet students are not able to access funding or bursaries.

Conference Further Believes:

1. This year NUS held consultations with FE learners across England, supporting them in building a vision for the future of further education post area reviews.
2. Learners highlighted that student support services are a key part of their ability to access education.
3. Area reviews have now finished colleges are now implementing their recommendations.
4. Area reviews present a serious and significant shake up to the delivery of FE, with over 100 colleges expected to merge and share non-teaching services between colleges.

[3]http://www.sixthformcolleges.org/sites/default/files/SFCA%20Costing%20The%20Sixth%20Form%20Curriculum%28web%20version%29.pdf
[4]https://www.nus.org.uk/global/nus_sp_report_web.pdf/

5. The exact impact that mergers will have on student support services is currently unknown. However they will be expensive to implement, costing colleges substantial amounts of time, money and resource.
6. The mergers will put increased pressure on student support services. Both in terms of cost, but also in terms of the increased number of students accessing the service in a merged college.
7. NUS should be supporting SUs to work with their institution, local authority and UK government to ensure FE remains accessible for all.
8. Good support services will look different in different areas of the UK.

Conference Resolves:

1. To ensure that the protection of student support services are included in any future work around Area Review implementations.
2. To encourage and support SUs to collaborate and campaign at a regional level to protect their services.
3. For the FE Zone Committee to collaborate with the Welfare Zone Committee on this issue.
4. For the VPFE to collaborate and support the NUS officers in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales to protect and enhance student support services.
5. To work with trade unions and other partners to campaign for an increase in FE investment.